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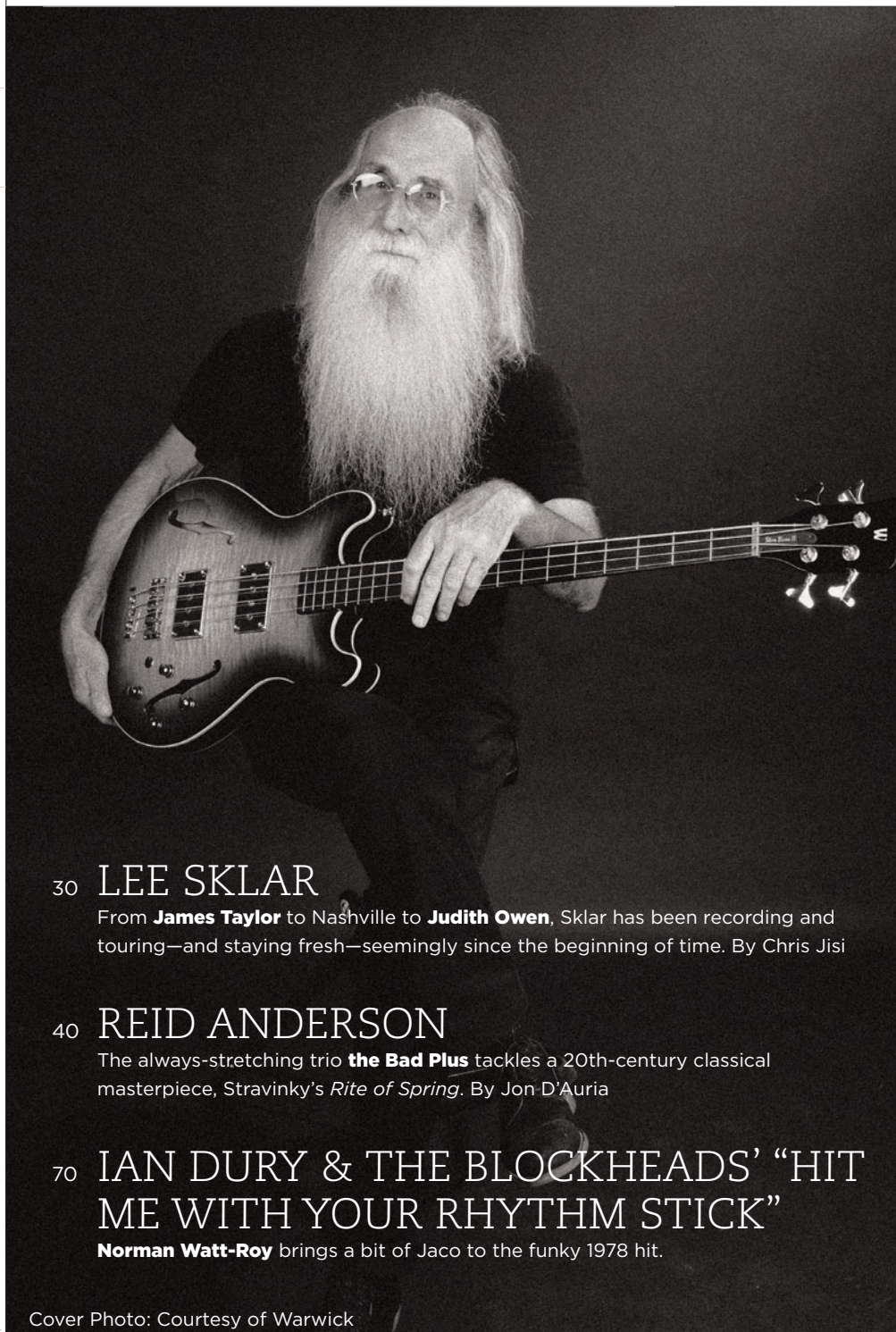
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Cover Photo: Courtesy of Warwick

BASS PLAYER (ISSN 1050-785X) is published 13 times a year, monthly plus a Holiday issue to follow the December issue, by NewBay Media LLC, 1111 Bayhill Drive, Suite 125, San Bruno, CA 94066. Periodicals Postage Paid at San Bruno, CA and at additional mailing offices. Canadian GST No. R13288078, Customer No. 2116057, Agreement No. 40011901. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Bass Player, Box 469069, Escondido, CA 92046.

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Editorial Director Michael Molenda, mmolenda@nbmedia.com
Editor Chris Jisi, bpeditor@nbmedia.com
Consulting Editor Karl Coryat
Senior Contributing Editor E. E. Bradman
Contributing Editors Ed Friedland, Jonathan Herrera
Staff Writer Jimmy Leslie

Art Director Paul Haggard
Production Manager Amy Santana

Publisher Joe Perry

jperry@nbmedia.com, (212) 378-0464

Advertising Director, Eastern Region, Midwest & Europe

Jeff Donnenwerth, jdonnenwerth@nbmedia.com, (770) 643-1425

Advertising Director, Western Region & Asia Mari Deetz

mdeetz@nbmedia.com, (650) 238-0344

Advertising Sales, Eastern Accounts Anna Blumenthal

ablumenthal@nbmedia.com, (646) 723-5404

Specialty Sales Advertising, West Michelle Eigen

meigen@nbmedia.com, (650) 238-0325

Specialty Sales Advertising, East Jon Brudner

jbrudner@nbmedia.com, (917) 281-4721

THE NEWBAY MUSIC GROUP

VICE PRESIDENT, PUBLISHING DIRECTOR: Bill Amstutz

GROUP PUBLISHER: Bob Ziltz

EDITORIAL DIRECTOR: Brad Tolinski

SENIOR FINANCIAL ANALYST: Bob Jenkins

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Please direct all advertising and editorial inquiries to:

BASS PLAYER, 1111 Bayhill Drive, Suite 125, San Bruno, CA 94066
(650) 238-0260; FAX (650) 238-0261; bassplayer@nbmedia.com

Subscription orders, inquiries, address changes, and Back Issues:

BASS PLAYER, P.O. Box 469069, Escondido, CA 92046-9069. For quick-est service, telephone: 800-234-1831 or (760) 291-1537. bassplayer@pcspublink.com

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(Rob Zombie, Goo Goo Dolls, P. Diddy, Billy Idol)



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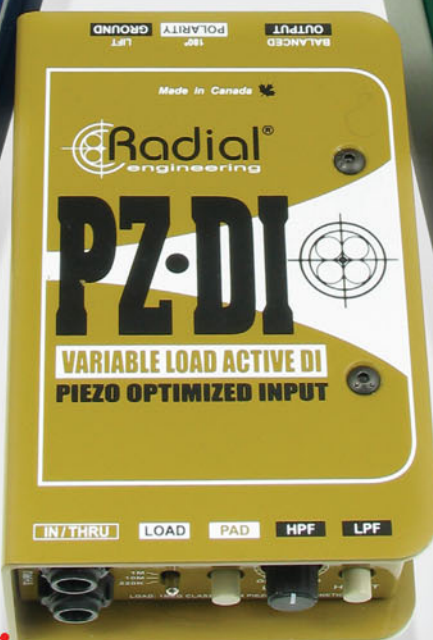
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LOWDOWN



CHRIS JISI

Transitioning

PLEASE ALLOW ME TO RE-INTRODUCE MYSELF (WITH APOLOGIES TO THE STONES). AS

longtime readers may know, I've been around these parts from the beginning, interviewing bass players, transcribing their lines, and writing about their art. I've also been fortunate to assist with each BASS PLAYER LIVE! event. With the departure of Brian Fox, one of six terrific editors I've worked under, BP has asked me to step into a larger, more visible role. While that conflicts somewhat with my bass player-type personality—enjoying the anonymous position of helping to hold the band and the music together, while safely hidden behind the front line of vocalists and performers—it's a job I willingly embrace for that very same reason: The team around me remains first-rate. In Elton Bradman, Jon Herrera, Ed Friedland, and Karl Coryat, I'm looking at the Gold Glove infield of editing cores, well-assisted by contributors like John Goldsby, Jon D'Auria, and Jimmy Leslie. Add in Publisher Joe Perry and his sales team, Editorial Director Michael Molenda, Managing Editor Kevin Owens, Paul Haggard and his art department, and other hard-working staffers, and I—and more importantly, BP—remain in good hands (with apologies to that insurance company).

Going forward, BP will continue to provide the best in artist interviews and coverage, relevant lessons, and detailed reviews of the latest gear—all with our ever-present edict to dig deeper. We'll also soon be announcing the dates for BASS PLAYER LIVE! 2014, in Los Angeles, and introducing our new and improved website a little further down the road. And of course, we're always interested in your input to ensure that BP is the bass periodical that you want to read. So send your comments and criticisms to bpeditor@nbmedia.com, and let me know what's on your mind and under your fingers. And please, take it easy on the not-so-new guy.

Chris Jisi

DIG MY RIG!

I MIGHT GET MISTAKEN FOR BEING THE BIGGEST GEDDY LEE

fan ever... okay, so I am! He turned my musical world upside down in 1981. I just didn't get my hands on my first bass until 1985. From left to right, my 1987 Wal Mach I in midnight blue; my Geddy Lee signature Jazz, which I pre-ordered back in 1998 the day after I read about it in BASS PLAYER's winter NAMM report; 2001 American Fender Jazz in hot rod red, currently stung with flatwounds; 1975 Rickenbacker 4001, recently re-fretted by Mike Lull at his Bellevue, Washington shop. My amp is a Trace Elliot combo with the GP12SMX preamp. I use the two Line 6 PODs to record my passive basses, one signal through a "bass amp" and the other through a "guitar amp." The Wal records and sounds amazing through an IMP-2 passive direct box. —JOHN ROBERTS

Got a rig you think we'd dig? Send a photo and description to digmyrig@gmail.com.



COURT OF OPINION

What great bass performance have you witnessed recently?

Join the conversation at facebook.com/bassplayermag.



I saw Rush last year and then the next week saw Tony Levin with Peter Gabriel. It was a good month!

—Robyn Bailey-Grimsley



Steve DiGiorgio at the Death/DTA tour in France. What an amazing, fretless master!

—Laurent Schmitt



Brian Beller with the Aristocrats and Nick Beggs with Steven Wilson both blew my mind.

—Kyle Lund



Esperanza Spalding at Enjoy Jazz in Heidelberg, Germany.

—Frank Backes



Stanley Clarke at the Syracuse Jazz Fest.

—Mark O'Brien



Nick Beggs on Steve Hackett's Genesis Extended tour in Collingswood, New Jersey.

—Zach Graves



Billy Sheehan with Mr. Big in Surabaya, Indonesia.

—Muhammad Firmansjah



Juan García-Herreros, a.k.a. Snow Owl, with his new program Normas. Best live concert I've seen in a long time. An absolute master on his instrument, and a great composer! —Diana Prince



Will Kubley, with Passafire. In my opinion, one of the most creative bassists of our time. Genius use of effect pedals, and he is a killer harmonist. —Will Strickland



David Hood in a recording session at his former Muscle Shoals Sound studio.

—Andy Keenum



Steve Swallow with John Scofield Trio and Felix Pastorius with the Yellowjackets. Both shows were at the Kuumbwa Jazz Center in Santa Cruz, California. —Ron Sotelo



Bonnie Buitrago with Nashville Pussy. Stupendous energy and great note choices!

—Andrew Delunas

TIMELINE

This Month In Bass History: July

PAUL HAGGARD

- 1ST** Blues god Willie Dixon born, **1915**. Steppenwolf bassist Rushton Moreve dies in a motorcycle accident, **1981**.
- 2ND** Noel Redding quits the Jimi Hendrix Experience, **1968**.
- 6TH** Bill Evans bassist Scott LaFaro killed in an auto accident at 25, **1961**. James Brown goes to No. 2 on the U.S. album chart with *Live at the Apollo*, featuring the wicked grooves of bass man Hubert Perry, **1963**.
- 7TH** Miles Davis sideman and solo star Michael Henderson born, **1951**.
- 9TH** Paul McCartney and Wings play their first gig, **1972**.
- 13TH** West Coast jazz giant Leroy Vinnegar born, **1928**. Geezer Butler and Black Sabbath play their first gig, **1968**. New York Dolls bassist Arthur "Killer" Kane dies, **2004**.
- 14TH** Session vet Scott Edwards' groovin' line helps Donna Summer reach No. 1 with "Bad Girls," **1979**.
- 16TH** Jack Bruce, Ginger Baker, and Eric Clapton form Cream, **1966**.
- 17TH** L.A. studio bass king Abraham Laboriel born, **1947**. Black Sabbath's Geezer Butler born, **1949**. Musical director Aston "Family Man" Barrett and the Wailers back Bob Marley for the first of two shows later released as the *Live!* album, **1975**.
- 18TH** Billy Joel's "It's Still Rock and Roll to Me," armed with Doug Stegmeyer's killer line, rules the charts, **1980**.
- 19TH** Glenn Hughes and the rest of Deep Purple call it a day, **1976**.
- 21ST** Roger Waters kicks off *The Wall* at the Berlin Wall, **1990**.
- 25TH** Bob Dylan, backed by Jerome Arnold and other members of the Butterfield Blues Band, goes electric at the Newport Folk Festival, **1965**.
- 26TH** Randy Meisner's catchy bass line on the title track helps take the Eagles' *One of These Nights* to No. 1, **1975**.
- 27TH** Paul Young's "Everytime You Go Away," a showcase for Pino Palladino's fretless StingRay, hits No. 1, **1983**. Lynyrd Skynyrd bassist Leon Wilkeson dies, **2001**.
- 28TH** Fusion/contemporary jazz luminary Gerald Veasley born, **1955**.
- 29TH** Prog-rock icon and Rock & Roll Hall of Fame member Geddy Lee born, **1953**.
- 31ST** James Taylor, backed by Lee Sklar and other L.A. session heavies, hits the top of the U.S. charts with "You've Got a Friend," **1971**.

THE REAL WORLD



Charley Sabatino

Home base Queens, New York

Occupation Upright and electric bassist, teacher, and clinician

Gigs Music Director of the Jazz Workshops at the Cadenza Music Schools in Queens, Private teacher, freelance bassist, and bassist for the Lauren Lee Jazz Project

Basses Lakland 44-94 Deluxe, Fodera Anthony Jackson Contrabass, 50-year-old Czech carved-top upright, Sue Lipkins German bow

Rig Hartke Hy-Drive 1x12 combo, Hartke 4x10 cabinet, Walter Woods Electracoustic head

Effects None

Strings, etc. SIT Rock Brites Nickel

Heroes & inspiration No heroes. Inspired initially by John Entwistle, Geddy Lee, Stanley Clarke, then Miles Davis, Coltrane, Sonny Rollins, Peter Washington, Paul Chambers, Eric Dolphy, and Ella Fitzgerald

Contact facebook.com/charleysabatino

How did you come to play bass?

My friend Angus came over, put the Who's *Quadrophenia* on my turntable, and played me "The Real Me." I listened and thought to myself, "Yup, that's what I want to do."

What's a lesson you've learned along the way?

Be prepared, show up on time, follow the dress code, don't play too loud, don't overplay. Listen! Ultimately, sound like *you*, not someone else.

What are your musical goals?

To continue to play, grow, and explore until 45 minutes after they bury me.

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EXPO



JIMMY LESLIE



Expressionism

James Singleton takes flight with Astral Project in the Zatarain's/WWOZ Jazz Tent at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival on April 27, 2014.

BASSNOTES



Mimi Jones

Balancing Act

BY JON D'AURIA |

ON HER SOPHOMORE ALBUM, *BALANCE*, MIMI JONES JUGGLES THE roles of bassist, singer, composer, and bandleader on a record that has as much soul as it does swing. The opening track, "Nothing Like You," features a bowed intro that transitions into an uptempo walking line before Jones unleashes a melodic solo where she effortlessly traverses every bit of real estate that her fingerboard has to offer. And if her skillful playing isn't enough, her tremendous vocal ability that ranges from a sultry, Nina Simone-esque timbre to a beautifully pitched falsetto steals the show on tracks like "Traveler" and "Everybody Loves the Sunshine."

As a budding bass player, the New York native studied at the Harlem and LaGuardia schools of the arts before she attended the Manhattan School of Music, where she studied under an impressive list of jazz legends, including Ron Carter and Max Roach. Jones then made a statement with her 2009 debut *A New Day*, which revealed the bluesy and folky side of her playing. On her latest record, Jones' evolution as a bass player and composer shows a depth of experience beyond her years that mixes her traditional jazz foundation with shades of modern hip-hop and R&B. And if her bass work weren't already awe-inspiring, this time around Mrs. Jones has added a slew of new techniques to her already impressive bag of tricks.

What new techniques did you try on this album?

On "Patriot" I did the whole middle section using double-stops, which is really hard to do on upright. It takes focus to play in tune and make it flow smoothly. I also played some electric bass, which I hadn't done before. I took some lessons with Lonnie Plaxico and I learned a lot from him. On "Traveler" I play an odd-metered ostinato line, and that was really hard to play and sing over. I knew I wanted to do some bowing on this album because I used to bow all the time when I was studying classical and jazz composition in school. When I wrote "Nothing Like You" I bowed the melody and created the arrangement around it. I also took more solos on this record because I didn't take many on my first album.

How do you typically compose your songs?

I practice every day, and a lot of my riffs come from that. I love it when I get an idea when I'm practicing, but then I have to stop and record it on my phone, and that takes away about ten minutes from my practice time. Then I put it away and I'll go back and go through the ideas I come up with. I never like to force ideas. I love it when they come organically and when the first melody that comes to mind has potential to be a song.

What's the secret to your booming bass tone?

I'm extremely bottom-heavy with my sound, and I've gotten into many arguments with engineers over my tone. It really depends on the frequency of the room and the size of the hall, because it can become heavy with too much low end. I've learned to roll down the lows a bit and raise the midrange to get it so it sounds natural but still deep. If it's a hip-hop thing then I know I need the bottom, but if it's folky or melodic, then I rely

on my mids. The most important thing is clarity. It needs to cut in every circumstance.

Do you feel that women play the bass differently than men?

I definitely think there are subtle differences between their approach. Physically, it's kind of ironic because it's such a big instrument and women tend to be smaller than men, so that can make it more challenging. But the bass has more of a supporting role, so it can have somewhat of a maternal embodiment. There's something about the touch of it and something about the role of the bass that makes women sound distinct on it. It is a generalization, but I find it to be true. Really, it depends on the player regardless of gender. **BP**

INFO



Mimi Jones, *Balance*
[Miriam Sullivan, 2014]

LISTEN

Bass Karl Meisel
upright, Juzek Czech
upright, Fender
Precision Lyte
Amp Gallien-Krueger
400RB-IV, SWR
Goliath 4x10
Strings Corelli
Orchestral Strings

EQUIP





THE CULT, OWL

Chris Wyse Occult Chops

BY JON D'AURIA | PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM GILBERT

THOUGH CHRIS WYSE HAS DEDICATED HIS LIFE TO rock & roll, he has always been more than a simple rock bass player. Not only does he excel at fingerstyle playing, picking, tapping, and cordial composition on electric, he is also a skilled upright player. Which is why when Wyse first moved from New York to Los Angeles in 1990, he became a first-call player for famed producer Bob Rock, which led to work with Ozzy Osbourne, Mick Jagger, Scott Weiland, Jerry Cantrell, and Ace Frehley, among others. But more than being a session player, Wyse's true passion has always been playing in bands, so it was only natural that in 2006 he landed the role as the bass player for gothic-rockers the Cult.

These days, when Wyse isn't holding it down for the Cult, he's busy playing in his own project, Owl, an experimental rock group where his skillful chops and powerful lead vocals take center stage. Owl just wrapped up its third studio album, which features heavy power anthems with technically daunting twists led by Wyse's often effected bass. This time around Wyse is layering electric and upright bass more than ever, as his distorted riffs are doubled with deep bowed lines. And while Wyse's work in the past is nothing short of impressive, he believes that this material is his finest bass work yet.

How did you go about tracking the new Owl album?

Oddly enough, I ended up tracking the bass last when everything else was done. I scratch-tracked the songs with an old Spector bass out in New York to lay down the ideas over a drum machine, but those were just the basic concepts at the time. We put together the demos over a few sessions and then worked backwards. I had never done that before and it was really interesting to take that approach.

How is your writing different on this material?

For a long time I would write things on bass that were big classical compositions with endless changes using over-the-top chops. Now I still push the envelope, but it's more rock & roll, and it's honed a lot more. I still like to write nasty bass riffs in odd time signatures, but

they're songs that anyone can sing and groove to. My writing has more of a center now, but I do a lot of things that bass players will appreciate and things that you'll only catch after listening to it multiple times.

How does your mentality change when you're working as a sideman?

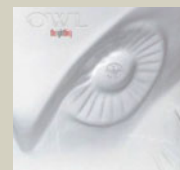
When you're working with a new band or as a session player, you can't just bulldoze in and do your thing and solo all over their music. You have to be smart and know their music and know what they're looking for. Even in Owl, it's a band, so all of the members have a say in what we write, and that's all part of being in a band. With the Cult they already had a starting point, so I began there and honored their sound, and then over time incorporated myself into their music more. I've even pulled out the upright bass with them in the studio to experiment with things.

How do you approach upright bass differently than electric bass?

When I play upright I have to be so focused that I need to just trust that I'm going to hit the right notes, especially when I'm singing. But like anything, it becomes a locked-in, motorized type of thing. If your intonation is off, you might have to look at the neck a bit more. I like to leave my tuner on so I can peek down to see that my notes are on. On the projects that I play upright on, my tone has to compete with distortion and loud drums, so I always make sure my sound is big and dialed in. **BP**

i INFO

LISTEN



Owl, *The Right Thing*
[Overit, 2013]

EQUIP

Bass 1962 Fender Precision Reissue, Nash P-Bass, Customized 1995 Fender Precision, NS Design NXT Double Bass, 1950s Kay Upright
Amp Ampeg SVT-VR, Ampeg SVT 810E, Ampeg Micro-CL Mini
Pedals Tech 21 Sans Amp Classic DI, Dunlop Cry Baby 105Q Bass Wah, Electro-Harmonix Epitome, DigiTech Bass Driver, MXR Carbon Copy Delay
Strings D'Addario Helicore Hybrid, D'Addario Double Bass Strings



DEATH

Bobby Hackney

Motor City Madness, Reanimated

BY BILL MURPHY | PHOTOGRAPH BY JIM GILBERT

LESS THAN TWO MINUTES INTO THE EYE-OPENING 2012

rockumentary *A Band Called Death*, guitarist Vernon Reid pretty much sums up what everyone else has been thinking about the Detroit-based power trio whose long-lost debut, *...For the Whole World to See*, turned history on its head when it was rediscovered and released in 2009, nearly 35 years after the fact. In Reid's unvarnished estimation, "They're the unknown soldiers of rock!"

That's a badge that Bobby Hackney, bassist and lead singer, wears with pride. "It's amazing," he marvels. "Back in 1974, we were three black brothers on the east side of Detroit, trying to play rock & roll, and no one understood what we were doing. People looked at us funny, record companies rejected us—I mean, for me and my brother Dannis, all the recognition we're getting now is very emotional. It's also surreal, because we never thought anybody would ever hear this music, let alone appreciate it and love it, you know?"

The long strange trip started in the late '60s, when Bobby got his first Teisco guitar from a Sears catalog; his brother David quickly commandeered and then pawned it. "When I finally got the money together, I went into the pawn shop, and this beautiful red bass caught my eye," Hackney recalls with a laugh. "It was a Gibson knockoff, but I was just drawn to that thing. So instead of putting a down payment on my guitar, I put it on the bass."

With David on guitar and Dannis on drums, Bobby drew inspiration from other bass-playing singers—Paul McCartney and Jermaine Jackson in particular. Being a Detroit native, he was also keenly aware of Motown and the city's vibrant rock scene, and took cues from James Jamerson, Grand Funk Railroad's Mel Schacher, the MCS's Michael Davis, and rock heavyweights like John Paul Jones, John Entwistle, and Roger Glover, all of whom regularly came through town on tour.

Thanks to Glover, Hackney set his sights on the Rickenbacker 4001, which became his go-to bass, along with a '72 Fender Precision, when the newly minted Death trio first started recording in 1974. *Death III* [Drag City] is the latest disc to document the band's unusual and visionary creative arc; turning on a dime from dirt-fueled garage protopunk ("North Street") to liquid psychedelia ("We Are Only People"), the brothers play together with one mind. Bobby can dig buzzsaw-deep or lay back, relaxed and melodic, with his close-to-the-bridge two-fingered stroke. "If you look on the back of our *Spiritual Mental Physical* album, you can see my Acoustic amp. Sometimes I used an Ampeg SVT, but I



liked the Acoustic because it really threw the sound. It was smooth and not so thud-heavy, with harmonics that came out better than the Ampeg. Plus, it went really well with the Rickenbacker."

Relegated to the fringes without a record deal, Death persevered until 1981, when the band changed its name to the 4th Movement and took up a gospel-rock sound. When David Hackney died in 2000, the two remaining

brothers were convinced the band's legacy had died with him. "Then Drag City and the whole world came knocking," Bobby says. "We've got all these tapes and everything, so we get a chance now to complete David's dream." Now reconstituted—perhaps reanimated is more apt—with guitarist Bobbie Duncan, Death was recently back on the road for a West Coast swing, with more dates planned throughout 2014. Now recognized as the unofficial godfathers of punk rock (before the Ramones, and years before the term "punk" came into vogue), Hackney and the band are soaking up the attention with renewed fervor. "Everything that you see us doing today, it's just as if we picked up where we left off in 1975. David and I wrote a wealth of songs that never even made it to the studio. I mean, we wrote songs with a fever. We worked on it day in and day out, and David was almost 24/7, you know? It blows our minds sometimes, how much we did and have left to do, and that's why we're so committed to finishing this chapter." **BP**

INFO

Basses Late-model Rickenbacker 4001, Fender American Deluxe Precision; in 1975, '74 Rickenbacker 4001, '72 Fender Precision

Amps 2 Acoustic B600H heads & 2 B810 8x10 cabinets; in 1975, Acoustic 370 head & 301 cabinet

Strings GHS Bass Boomers

EQUIP



Evan Marien Brooklyn Current

BY CHRIS JISI | PHOTOGRAPH BY SIMON C.F. YU

EVER SINCE EVAN MARIEN JOINED ESPERANZA

Spalding and Hadrien Feraud as a top three Most Exciting New Player in BP's 2009 Reader's Choice Awards poll, the Illinois-born fretboard futurist has been plying his techno-trade from his Brooklyn home base—although, he notes, “The electronic music movement is globe-wide and isn't limited to the physical world.” Marien's fourth CD, *We Are All You*, is a sweeping sonic solo affair, save for a one-track appearance by drummer Dana Hawkins, and a song remix by drummer Zach Danziger, under his Mr. Barrington alias, Stix Beiderbecke. With Marien using everything from “Teentown” to Turkish music as source material, we needed to find out more.

What was the inspiration behind creating *We Are All You*?

It was the result of sorting through all the music I've written since my last solo album in 2011, *Here We Are*, and finding a batch I felt I should release together. I usually write my songs with drums first, then I add melodic and harmonic textures and colors in whatever tonality I'm feeling, and then I play bass over it to find a way to glue the tune together. This album features the bass as both a support and a melodic rhythm instrument; I take some solos but it's not a solo bass CD. I wanted to showcase my entire spectrum as a musician and artist, which includes composing, producing, mixing, mastering, and artwork. I wrote, programmed, and recorded everything using [Propellerhead Software] Reason; it has a unique sound and heaviness that I can't find in other digital audio workstations.

What led you to cover “Teentown”?

While attending Berklee in 2008, a friend showed me a version he came up with in 9/8, or something. I got inspired to do my own version and found 13/8 to flow with the melody nicely, without changing the phrasing or cutting the melody short. I worked on it, put it in a folder, and forgot about it until I was cleaning out a hard

drive last year and realized it was something this album needed. My take is a fast-paced, drum 'n' bass-infused version of the song. For my solo, I practiced with the track and came up with E minor pentatonic as a home base to play off of.

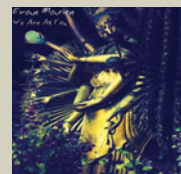
What is the Eastern-sounding technique you use on “Aeon” and “Finale”?

A couple years ago I was playing with guitarist David Fiuczynski and he turned me onto a lot of Turkish and Arabic music. I started working on Eastern inflections, like plucking really close to the bridge, and left-hand pull-ons/pull-offs. If you listen to Fiuczynski's playing on my song “Lao's Tao” from my first album, *Between Worlds*, that's the kind of sound I wanted for the color of “Aeon” and the intro of “Finale.”

What speaks to you about using an electronica format on many of your recordings and projects?

I'm attracted to the texture and colors that are possible with sound synthesis. My influences are electronic pioneers like Weather Report and Squarepusher. I've always wanted to be able to create music my own way and let other people figure out how to categorize it. I think most jazz or improvisational artists are influenced by the times they live in, and it infuses in their own music. I feel my music is a product of the relationship that we as human beings have created with machines. **BP**

i INFO



Evan Marien, *We Are All You* [evanmarien.com, 2014]

LISTEN

Basses Ken Smith Custom Burner 5-string; Campbell American Bass RJ Custom



EQUIP

Rig Markbass F1 head, New York 804 cabinet, Mini CMD 121P combo

Effects Pigtronix Echolution 2; Source Audio Dimension Reverb and Hot Hand Controller; Boss SYB-5 Bass Synthesizer, OC-2 Octave

Strings GHS custom stainless steel set (.030-.120)



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HIGHLIGHTS FROM BASS PLAYER LIVE!

Rickey Minor Going Beyond

BY CHRIS JISI | PHOTOGRAPH BY ALEX KLUFT



From left:
Freddie
Washington,
Rickey Minor,
Nathan East

FOR RICKEY MINOR AND HIS CLINIC GUESTS AT

last November's BASS PLAYER LIVE!, Nathan East and "Ready" Freddie Washington, high-profile plucking lay ahead in 2014. Minor moved his entire band from the *Tonight Show* to *American Idol* in February (with no days off), Washington looked at a 50-city national tour with Steely Dan, and East promoted his March-released self-titled solo CD on TV and onstage. So we were fortunate to have these folks (plus drum heavy Steve Ferrone) for a meet-up on SIR's Room A stage, under the working title "Beyond the Bass." After an opening jam on a blues shuffle in *D*, and introductions, that's exactly what Minor asked Washington. "For me, beyond the bass is about feel," explained Freddie. "If you didn't have a bass in your hands, what does your body language convey? If you're trying to get people to dance, you gotta have some rhythm in your body. That's what I play off of: the rhythm in my body. I don't play bass anymore—I know how to play the instrument—I play bass *feel*."

You want them to say, 'Get me that cat. It's not the notes he was playing, it was the feel coming out of him.' That's what you need to get to the next level. Reading the notes is one thing; beyond that is, what does it *feel* like?" Minor asked East about expanding one's role beyond the bass. "That's where all of us become entrepreneurs and figure out ways to generate income," he replied, before listing songwriting, producing, arranging, Pro Tools skills, and other side roles. "Not wearing just one hat."

Rickey asked Steve Ferrone what he looks for in a bass player. "Someone I can't hear," laughed the stickman, recounting the story of he and Anthony Jackson being locked so tight on Chaka Khan's albums that it wasn't until playback that he was aware what the bass was doing. Next came a request for Washington to play his landmark "Forget Me Nots" bass line, and a discussion of East's role in the writing and recording of the Phil Collins/Philip Bailey hit "Easy Lover." This led to a second jam in *E*; **Ex. 1** shows the three interlocking parts the trio found using their most-musical ears.

Post-jam topics included Rickey's fan mail, dealing with less-than-satisfactory drummers (use body language and stay in one place), placement in the pocket, each bassist's first session, finding your passion and confidence, and interpreting written charts. A final jam, initiated by East, was Herbie Hancock's "Watermelon Man." Closing topics included versatility, the role of a musical director, and replacing a longtime bassist in a band. Summing up their exhaustive hour-and-ten-minute clinic, Rickey fittingly stressed, "Remember, in most cases, the gig doesn't go to the most talented player but to the hardest worker." **BP**

Medium funk

E7

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EX. 1

RICKEY:

NATHAN:



D'Angelico
New York

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TAIL PIECE: STOPBAR
CONTROLS: 1 VOLUME/ 1 TONE/ 3 WAY TOGGLE
HARDWARE: GOLD PLATED
TUNING MACHINES: DELUXE SEALED
NUT WIDTH: 1 5/8"
NECK MATERIAL: HARD MAPLE 2 PCS WA LNUT CENTER
SCALE: 32.25"
FRETBOARD MATERIAL: INDIAN ROSEWOOD
INLAY: MOTHER OF PEARL
FINISHES: NATURAL, VINTAGE SUNBURST, WHITE, BLACK, CHERRY
INPUT JACK: SWITCH CRAFT USA
CASE: DELUXE HARD CASE
LEFTY: YES (VINTAGE SUNBURST, NATURAL, WHITE)
FRETLESS: YES



BP RECOMMENDS

**HIROMI**
ALIVE [Telarc/Concord]

Having made three recordings and played countless concerts with **Anthony Jackson** and drummer **Simon Phillips**, gifted piano goddess **Hiromi** set out to capture the super-trio's live spontaneity and vivacity on her latest studio effort. Mission accomplished. The interval-twisting, chamber-jazz title track opener, as well as the more classically attuned exploration "Wanderer," boast drum step-outs—while the pop-leaning "Seeker," a nod to Hiromi's ever-present Ahmad Jamal influence, ends with a call-and-response improv between Jackson (still on his solidbody Fodera contrabass guitar "No. 10," having not yet received his hollowbody Presentation II) and the pianist. Most exhilarating is when the trio merges approaches: "Player" begins as an angular meter mash, gives way to "Spinning Wheel" changes for Jackson's groove solo, and morphs to double-time swing for Hiromi's stompin' solo turn. "Spirit" starts reverent and bluesy, settling in a haltime gospel feel for Jackson and

Hiromi's extended features, and riding out as a Chicago shuffle. "Life Goes On" alternates between modal and R&B changes before Hiromi lays out, revealing Jackson and Phillips' premium pocket-lock and telepathic time manipulation. The tour de force is "Warrior," which starts as a stately sonata, evolves into a unison Brubeck-ian strain, and includes drum breaks and a robust, range-reaching bass flight. The true magic, however, comes via the interplay during Hiromi's solo, as Jackson and Phillips spontaneously support, suggest, and react. The art of the piano trio is alive and well. —CHRIS JISI

**NIR FELDER**
GOLDEN AGE [Okeh Records/Sony]

Well-assisted by Gotham upright ace **Matt Penman**, pianist **Aaron Parks**, and drummer **Nate Smith**, rising N.Y.C. guitar supernova **Nir Felder** delivers a dazzling debut, establishing a musical voice as distinctive as the dirty tone of his \$250 Strat. "Lights" pits Penman's broken-eighths rock groove against a backdrop of historic civil rights speeches that crest at a John Mayer-size hook. "Sketches 2" juxtaposes more socially relevant speeches, Felder's Shorter-esque open chord cycle, Penman's independent bass line, and Smith's wire-to-wire kinetic drums. Elsewhere, "Bandits," with its pop backbeat and sensibility, and the bossa "Lover" (capped by Penman's spirited solo), recall the passion of '70s Pat Metheny. Felder takes us on a journey with each track, all while contending that the *Golden Age* is up for interpretation. —CHRIS JISI

**BECK**
MORNING PHASE [Fonograf]

Beck's laid-back and melodic 12th studio album features warm bass tones and mellow grooves provided by longtime collaborator **Justin Meldal-Johnsen**, the great **Stanley Clarke** (upright and electric), **Bram Inscore**, and Beck himself. While the impact of each player is prominent on the new material, it's easy to perceive that simply one player is behind the album's low end, which serves as a testament to Beck's vision. Highlights include Clarke's pocket line on "Heart Is a Drum" and Meldal-Johnsen's rolling fills on "Blackbird Chain." —JON D'AURIA

**LITTLE DRAGON**
NABUMA RUBBERBAND [Republic]

The trip-hop, electro-pop sound of **Little Dragon** returns in full force, and per usual, the Swedish outfit's M.O. is bass. **Fredrik Källgren Wallin**'s Industrial Radio MIDI bass blurs the lines between key-synths and pedal-effected frequencies, both of which he aptly covers. While the record boasts a slew of head bobbing, trance-inducing ostinato lines by Wallin, perhaps the most grooving moment comes in the intro of "Klapp Klapp," where his funky upright steals the show. —JON D'AURIA

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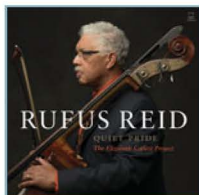
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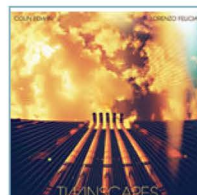
St. Vincent's latest album continues to push the boundaries of digital bass, thanks to the Minimoog work of **Bobby Sparks** and **Adam Pickrell**. The grinding, over-driven tones of Sparks and Pickrell are almost jarring on songs like "Rattlesnake" and "Birth in Reverse," while they favor softer, traditional tones on "Prince Johnny" and "I Prefer Your Love." A must-hear for fans of innovative synth bass. —JON D'AURIA



RUFUS REID
QUIET PRIDE: THE ELIZABETH CATLETT PROJECT [Motéma]

On **Rufus Reid**'s ambitious new project, the 70-year-old jazz legend channeled inspiration from famed artist Elizabeth Catlett's work and composed a six-part movement using a 20-piece orchestra to accompany his upright. Reid's profound vision comes to life beginning with the ominously bowed opening of "Prelude to Recognition," which flows into "Recognition," a powerfully contrasting

jazz tune with cleverly phrased walking lines over syncopated drumbeats. As the album concludes with the big band sound of "Glory," Reid takes a victory lap while displaying the rich, ruminative lines that have solidified him as a jazz staple. —JON D'AURIA



COLIN EDWIN AND LORENZO FELICIATI
TWINSCAPES [Rare Noise]

If you assume that an album co-led by two bass players necessarily entails 16th-note duels and burning shred-fests, think again. This soulful slice of low-end heaven features Porcupine Tree's **Colin Edwin** and European bass heavyweight **Lorenzo Feliciati** seamlessly and tastefully sharing bass duties, leading a four-piece band, and bringing chops, tone, and big bottom to a mélange of dreamy and fiery soundscapes (trumpeter Nils Petter Molvaer's warm, long lines are a highlight). The proceedings definitely bear the imprint of bass magus **Bill Laswell**, who mixed the album, and occasionally, the fretless forays conjure the specter of the late, great Mick Karn. Good stuff. —E.E. BRADMAN **BP**



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Direct \$795

Contact woundedpaw.com

D'ORAZIO

Spyrchrome Upright Bass Strings

Italian string manufacturer D'Orazio goes for the psychobilly slap-style crowd with the new Spyrachrome set, which they describe as soft to the touch, with high magnetic response for improved use with pickups. D'Orazio makes Spyrachromes with a proprietary flat wire steel/chrome winding over a steel rope core, and the company offers the sets in 3/4 and 4/4 scales and in *E* and *F#* tunings.

List \$100

Contact doraziostings.it

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List 49K 4-string, \$1,130; 59K 5-string, \$1,200; \$69K 6-string, \$1,280

Contact carvinguitars.com

MBS EFFECTOS

Evolution Volume Pedal

Volume-pedal aficionados have a new reason to celebrate with the Evolution, an active pedal that boasts a buffer so transparent that you can control instrument volume without changing your tone. The Evolution's buffered tuner output makes it easy to quickly tune, and you can also use it to split the signal into dry and wet stereo, and blend in effects.

List \$120

Contact mbsefectos.com.ar



SOURCE AUDIO

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The Soundblox Hub links any five Soundblox 2 pedals and uses MIDI program-change and control-change messages to save and recall up to 128 pedal "scenes," allowing players to use the pedals—as well as expression pedals or Hot Hand controllers—like a multi-effects unit. Best of all, you can connect the Hub to your computer via USB to edit its presets and parameters and update software and firmware.

Street \$100

Contact sourceaudio.net



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Direct \$229

Contact shredneck.com



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CX Series bass cabinets

Each of G-K's new ceramic-driver, 8-ohm CX bass cabs—the 300-watt CX115 1x15, the 400-watt CX210 2x10, and the CX410 4x10, rated at 800 watts in either 4- or 8-ohm versions—sports both Speakon and 1/4" inputs and a horn with a defeat switch. They're nice and light, too: The CX115 is 35 pounds, the CX210 is 37 pounds, and the 67-pound CX410 comes with recessed, spring-loaded handles.

Street CX115, \$350;

CX210, \$350; CX410, \$500

Contact gallien-krueger.com



CX115



CX410



CX210



Lee Sklar

The Song Remains Supreme

SOMEWHERE, NOT LONG AFTER LEO FENDER'S INVENTION OF THE ELECTRIC BASS GUITAR, A FLOWING BEARD, wire-rim spectacles, and a biting sense of humor became synonymous with the instrument. Those attributes of course belong to one Leland Sklar, a bona fide bass icon and one of the most instantly recognizable figures in contemporary music. Beyond the visual, ask any true bass fan about Mr. Sklar, and a more reverential reflection of classic recordings and performances comes to mind—the result of a remarkable career spanning six decades and approaching 2,700 albums.

Born in Milwaukee on May 28, 1947, Lee moved with his family to sunny Southern California four years later, enabling him to come of age amid an exploding musical scene that would be a frequent time-machine destination, if such a device existed. He first made sound waves on the late-'60s singer/songwriter circuit, with artists such as James Taylor, Carole King, and Jackson Browne. Quickly, his open mind and locked-in groove led to a steady session pace that included chart-topping pop, rock, and dance hits, movie and TV dates, and groundbreaking fusion sides. The '80s found him in high profile with Phil Collins, when not in

the studio. In the '90s, he extended his recording reach to Nashville, adding a spate of country classics to his career file. In the new millennium, the affable Sklar has been as diverse as ever, while fully embracing the bass community at trade shows and events worldwide—one incarnation being JoStLe, his clinic trio with Steve Bailey and Jonas Hellborg.

These days, Sklar has circled back to his singer/songwriter roots with Welsh vocalist/pianist Judith Owen, whose new CD, *Ebb & Flow* [Caroline], features a dozen song gems interpreted by Lee and his longtime fellow craftsmen, drummer Russ Kunkel and guitarist Waddy Wachtel. We began our discussion with the question of durability, and learned why Lee is an artist's and a song's best friend.

BY CHRIS JISI

PHOTO BY ROB SHANAHAN

What is the key to your longevity?

I tend to feel it's that I've always tried to diversify. Guys used to ask me, "How can you go on the road and turn down studio work?" Yet, I don't think I've had one year since 1970 that I haven't been on

tour. It's a matter of balancing it all. I constantly keep my ears wide open in terms of what's going on musically, and I try to stay in as many genres as I can. I also never say no unless I'm sure I'm going to get ripped off. When the call comes, I go, and I end up meeting a lot of new folks; and the next thing you know, I become their regular guy because I've gotten quite efficient at what I do. There's a big word-of-mouth element, too, because there's so much between producers and artists that is transitory. So you end up working for





hundreds of artists rather than one who hits and then misses. Ultimately, I think it's that I'm constantly availing myself. I'm not one of these guys who talks about the good old days. I just look at each day as the first day of my career and I keep moving. I don't care about what I've done in the past; the only thing I'm looking forward to is the next gig.

You've said you're not an intellectual player. Can you explain?

Even though I had years of training and theory, when that red light comes on I have almost an out-of-body experience. I don't really think about what I'm doing; I'm very visceral—I go by the seat of my pants and whatever my mood is in the moment. I just react to the vocalist's breathing or the flow of the instruments. That doesn't mean I'm not listening to the drums and minding the changes. There's a part of me that immediately locks into where the drummer is laying his kick drum, to see if I want to double it, or hint at it and do something else around that. After I do a track, my biggest fear is that they'll call me a few weeks later and say, "Something happened—you have to recut your part, and we want you to play it exactly the same!"

That non-intellectual approach extends to styles, too. I'm not an expert at reggae; somewhere in the back of my psyche I understand what it's about, but I try to do it on my terms. On the other hand, I do the Latin GRAMMY Awards each year, and the parts are all written out authentically, which is good because I would never play it that way, and I gain a tool in my arsenal.

You're also a stickler for being ready to record, the first time you hear a piece of music in the studio.

That's true. If someone sends me an mp3 of the song in advance, I usually won't listen to it. Or worse yet is when someone says we'd love to rehearse a few days before the session. That's the kiss of death, because we're going to play some fresh, mind-blowing shit, and it's all gonna be gone when we hit the studio. Generally, before anyone has had a chance to think—in those first few takes, when they're just responding to the song itself—that's when the juices flow and the magic happens. Unless a song is deeply complicated, by the fourth take I'm starting to daydream. The best scenario for me is when someone has saved me the trouble by sketching out a basic chord sheet, so I can

immediately start reacting to the song. The song remains supreme.

You played piano first; how did you get to bass, and what did you bring from your keyboard experience?

As a five-year-old, I was blown away by Liberace on TV, and I became a sort of prodigy, winning competitions. But when I got to junior high school, my music teacher, Ted Lynn, said, "We have 40 kids who play piano, but we need a string bass player." He pulled out an old Kay and said, "If you give it a go, I'll get you lessons." Man, the minute I plucked a string and felt the vibrations, that was it; I'd found my calling. The electric bass came four years later, when I was 16, out of frustration of not being heard. My dad took me to Stein on Vine and I got a Melody Bass and a St. George amp. Piano gave me the ability to read in two clefs and, moreover, an understanding of the rhythmic bottom end and the melodic top end. I never copied any player or got deep into anyone's style, but I gravitated to melodic players like McCartney, Tim Bogert, Jamerson, Jack Bruce, Dee Murray with Elton John; that affinity came from piano. Another early key for me was playing along with records by the Beatles, the Righteous Brothers, and James Brown. I used to learn the song at 33½ RPM, then bump it up to 45, find the key, and play along; then when I got comfortable, I would go back to 33½ and there was all this space in the music to navigate through.

Let's talk about when you first played with James Taylor and how that shaped your style.

I first met James while I was in a hard rock band called Wolfgang. He came to a rehearsal and we dug each other, so I got a call to play a gig with him at the Troubadour. As I listened to him, I thought, Well, he really doesn't need me because like a lot of folk musicians, he was a one-man band. Except he didn't just fill space with strums, he had all of these beautiful, intricate, moving fingerstyle parts—including the bass line. So I would listen to his thumb and at times double it, and other times I would try to find something that fit around that, maybe not a root but some other interval that would feed off and expand his part. There was never any real dialogue about what to play; his feeling was, that's what he hired me to do. The other bands I was in at the time were more aggressive and experimental, but I'm not sure how that figured in; it's hard to pinpoint exactly

Instinctual-Lee

WEND YOUR WAY THROUGH THE

vast archive of Lee Sklar's recordings and you'll find tracks that highlight various aspects of his well-honed playing style: his deep pocket, undersung syncopation, ever-melodic movement, legato slides, upper-register fills, balls-out rockin', and song-friendly sub-hooks. A slamming track that has a taste of all of these attributes is Steve Lukather's "Stab in the Back," from his 2008 solo CD *Ever Changing Times* [Frontiers], which the guitarist describes as his nod to Donald Fagen. Sklar played his "Frankenstein 4-string" and teamed up with drum ace Abe Laboriel Jr. **Example 1a** shows the basic two-bar verse figure. Listen for Lee's fat pocket, and how he shortens every other downbeat-anticipating A. **Example 1b** typifies the pre-chorus and is full of Sklar goodies. Instead of sticking to a root-5 rock bossa pattern, Lee jumps the octave in bar 2, and in adding motion on the descend, anticipates the coming *Fmaj7* chord by ending the measure on a C. Bar 3 is pure melody, as he outlines a descending *Fmaj7* chord and includes the passing tone *F#* (leading to the coming *G*). Bar 4 has a trademark Sklar gliss into the A and a feel-enhancing quarter-note triplet on beat *three*. Then, with the vocals laying out in bars 7 and 8, Lee lets loose with an ear-grabbing *F#m* pentatonic fill.

Similar magic can be found in **Ex. 1c**, the chorus: In bar 1, Sklar begins a diatonic climb up to the coming *G* chord, only to change direction midway and chromatically descend into it. Placement is the key in bar 2, as Lee lands on beat *three* with the 3rd, *B*, to start his melodic movement to the *Cmaj9* chord.

EX. 1A

Medium rock
♩ = 130

A7

Feeling as liberated and reactive as he always does, Lee issues a syncopated descending line starting on the 9th of the chord, which keeps its motion going through the *F13* chord in the next measure. Finally, he doubles Lukather's rockin' riff in bars 6–7. Listen also for Lee's spontaneous licks over the *A7* chord during the track's final 1:15.

EX. 1B

Medium rock
♩ = 130

Dm7 Em7 Fmaj7 G

EX. 1C

Medium rock
♩ = 130

Dm9 G13 Cmaj9 F13 Bm7b5

how a style evolves. I listen to my early recordings now and think, That's interesting, though not necessarily what I'd play now—but it works for the time. It's like looking back and dumping on the hair and clothes of an era; it's not really fair. I will say that the reunion with James and Carole King a few years back was amazing; we sounded like we'd just left off from our last gig in 1970.

It was proof that you can go home again, after all.

Two special early recordings for you were Jackson Browne's *Running on Empty* and Billy Cobham's *Spectrum*.

I love *Empty* because it's one of the only true live albums I've been involved with, as opposed to others where by the time everyone makes their fixes the only living thing left is the audience. On



Empty, what you hear is exactly what we did. We were on the bus recording, or we'd go to a hotel room, take the bed apart and stick the drums in; I had a little Univox amp that we'd put under the desk; Jackson would record in the bathroom for the echo—plus that band was just so strong onstage. *Spectrum* was during an interesting period. Nat Weiss, who helped the Beatles get to the U.S. and who managed James [Taylor], asked the Section, as we called James' backup band, to come to his hotel room one night so he could play us the test pressing of Mahavishnu's *Bird of Fire*. We flipped out, and he got the Section to open for Mahavishnu, which was a great combination because we were rock fusion and they were jazz fusion. That's where I met Billy, and when he got his first solo deal, he asked me to fly to Electric Lady in New York to play on it. We recorded everything in two days, mostly in first or second takes, and it *screamed*. I had known Tommy Bolin from my Wolfgang days, and to me he was the unexpected element that made it a classic. I had a lot of fun doing the reunion tour with Billy, Gary Husband, and Dean Brown in the early 2000s, but it would have been amazing if we could have had the original band. Every place we played on that tour was like dude musicology 101, with guys staring at our every note. It's flattering; the only problem I have is when I see bassists on YouTube play "Stratus" and they add all kinds of slaps and extras. The point of that bass line is its repeated, hypnotic effect.

Phil Collins has been a key artist in your career.

Phil is amazing; I love his pop sensibility as a songwriter, vocalist, and performer, and he's one of the greatest drummers I've ever played with—his pocket is so deep. We first met on a Lee Ritenour album date and hit it off. He called me to record *No Jacket Required* in 1984, and the subsequent world tour in '85, and by then "Sussudio" had become a No. 1 hit, so they changed all the venues on the tour from large clubs to arenas. Then I did *...But Seriously* and *Serious Hits...Live* in '89 and '90. He's so dedicated to making every show the best it can be. We rehearsed for a month before each tour, and every time we'd play a foreign country, he would learn his introduction in whatever the language was, by writing it out phonetically, and the audience would go crazy. He just gets it. The best news is in September Phil is bringing us in for a few weeks of

exploratory rehearsals to gauge the possibility of touring and recording again. We're going to have Jason Bonham on drums, who told me he's been playing along to Phil's stuff.

How do you reflect on your Nashville period?

I first started going to Nashville in 1992, through producer Jimmy Bowen, whom I knew from sessions in L.A. in the late '60s. There was a wonderful movement going on with artists like Reba McEntire, Vince Gill, Patty Loveless, George Strait, and Lyle Lovett, with whom I also got to tour. Everyone down there writes story songs, which gives you another dimension to play to. Musician-wise, the caliber is incredible, and we always tracked live. I got to work with the great drummer Eddie Bayers, and we had an instant hookup. The problem was the scene changed; six days of tracking for an album turned into four, then two, and then just single song dates. At that point, it didn't pay to fly us in anymore, so it dried up. And quite a few artists started coming to L.A. The last country album I did was for Clint Black, at Jackson Browne's studio.

You've been associated with quirky but effective gear, like mandofrets, Dingwall fanned-fret basses, and the Yamaha Sub-Kick.

The mandofrets evolved from my "Frankenstein 4-string," which is my main bass on 90 percent of my recording work. It was put together by John Caruthers in 1973 with a Charvel alder P-Bass body I handpicked for resonance, a maple '62 P-Bass neck I had that John reshaped to Jazz Bass dimensions, first-generation EMG-P pickups mounted in Jazz Bass position and flipped upside-down—which provided a more even sound—one of the first Hip-Shot D-Tuners, and a Badass bridge. In shaping the neck, John had to remove the frets. I saw some mandolin fret wire hanging in his shop and convinced him to try it, and we were thrilled with the results. It seemed to fit my style of using glissandos, and I had gotten tired of listening to railroad tracks clicking away; with a lightened touch it enables me to get an almost fretless sound.

I literally ran into Sheldon Dingwall and his bass at NAMM almost 20 years ago. He explained the fanned-fret system and the piano-like concept of different string lengths, with a 37" B string and 34" G. At that point, a lot of my work was replacing demo synth-bass parts, and I hadn't found a 5-string where the B matched the other strings. The Dingwall had a massive-sounding B that was in perfect tonality with the rest of the bass, and I've been



INFO

EQUIP

Basses "Frankenstein 4-string"; Dingwall Signature 5-string; fretted and fretless custom Warwick Star Bass II

Strings GHS Super Steels (.040, .058, .080, .102, .128)

Amps Euphonic Audio iAmp800, NL210 and CxL112 cabinets, iAmp800; Yamaha SKRM-100 Sub-Kick

Effects Boss OC-2 Octave, Aguilar Octamizer, early TC Electronic Chorus/Flange "in the pitch-shift position for fretless."

Recording "In the studio I still use my old Tube Works MosValve DI on all of my sessions."

CONNECT



- Lee plays with JoStLe (with Steve Bailey and Jonas Hellborg) at BASS PLAYER LIVE! 2011.

- Lee talks to BP about his historic 2010-11 tour with James Taylor and Carole King.

- Watch Judith Owen's promo clip with Lee.

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LEE SKLAR

“When someone says we’d love to rehearse a few days before the session, that’s the kiss of death.”

playing them ever since. Same with the Yamaha Sub-Kick; I saw Russ [Kunkel] using one and I wanted to try it. In big venues, I put the Sub-Kick in front of my cabinet, instead of a mic, and blend it with the DI signal, and the sound is ridiculous—like a CD.

And how about your “Producer Switch”?

Ah, the Producer Switch! That was inspired by incompetent producers ignorant of music terminology, who would make nebulous statements like, “Can you make it shimmer?” Or, “Can you make it more mauve-y?” I had done a TV session where Tommy Tedesco—out of sight of the producer, except for his head—kept bending over and picking up the same

acoustic guitar when asked to try mandolin and other stringed instruments. He would simply play in a different position on the neck, and it worked! So I immediately went home and drilled a hole in my bass and put in a dummy Switchcraft switch. Then when I would get one of these tenuous requests, I would make sure the producer could see me hit the switch, and I’d just play higher up on the neck or pluck closer to the bridge, and they’d say, “Perfect!” On my Warwick Star Basses there was an extra hole from a change in the electronics, so I had them put a Producer Switch on them.

How did Judith Owen’s project come about?

I’ve known Harry Shearer, Judith’s husband, for a long time. Every year they do a Christmas show and she plays piano and sings, and always sounds amazing. Apparently, her passion is ’60s–’70s singer-songwriter music, so she wanted to make a CD with the musicians who played on the music she loved. She called me, Russ, and Waddy, and played us her songs, which were great! So we went into Sunset Sound for a week, came up with our own parts, and cut live—I used my fretted Warwick Star Bass. Judith also wanted to do a James Taylor song, and Russ suggested “Hey Mister That’s Me up on the Jukebox,” because not a lot of folks have covered

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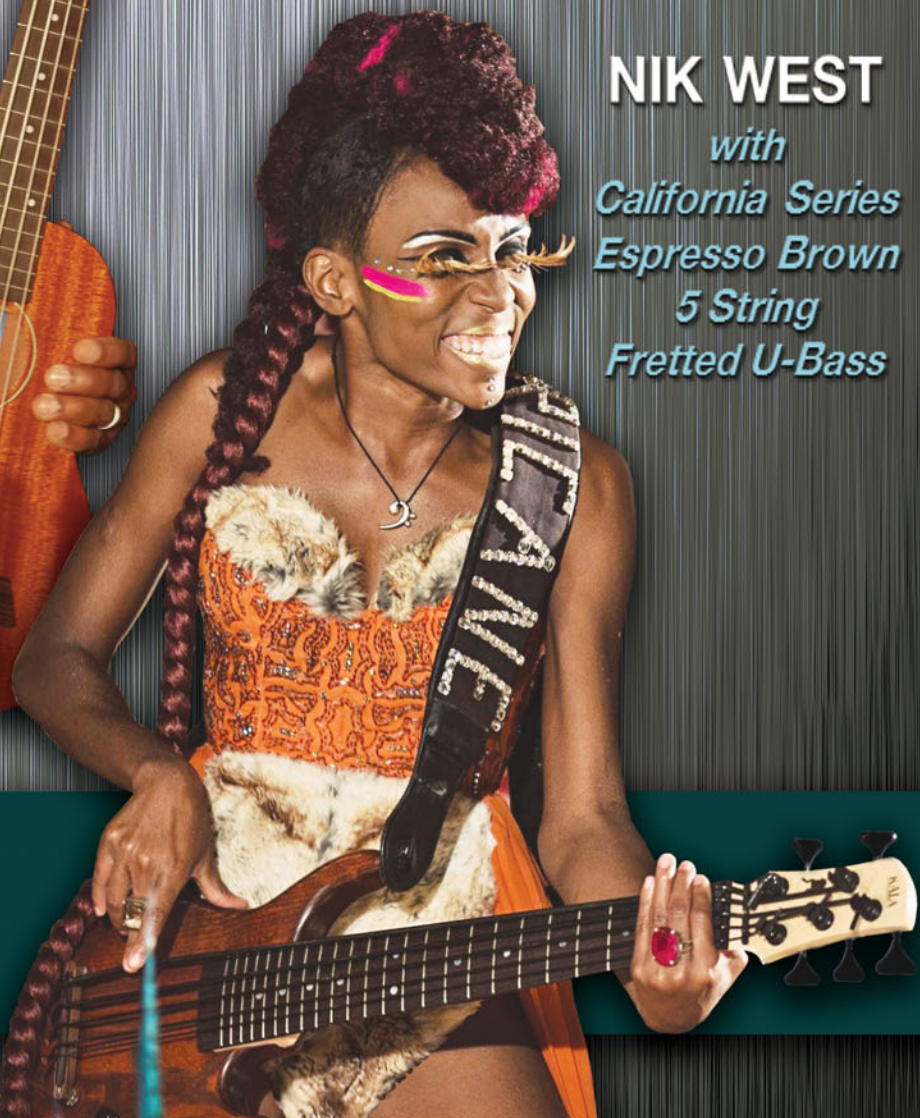
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LEE SKLAR

it. She'd never heard it, but the next morning she came in with a terrific arrangement. Soon after, she asked us about touring, and our schedules worked. Part of the tour is going to be just Judith and me in small listening clubs.

I'm intrigued by your bass sound on "Some Arrows Go in Deep," as well as how your approach to the songs will differ as a live duo.

On "Arrows," I used a little trick Bob Babbitt taught me, which is to take two small squares cut from a kitchen sponge and put one beneath the G and D and one beneath the A and E strings, right in front of the bridge; it sounds like you're using old La Bella flatwounds. As for the duo aspect with Judith, I'll try to cover a little more ground without being intrusive. There are a couple of songs with distinct guitar lines that I'll cop, and I have a fairly forward role on "You're Not Here Anymore"; plus I'll probably do a few more things rhythmically, not having drums. But the nature of the gig is to not overplay to make up for missing pieces. Judith covers everything on piano, and her time and feel are so good, it's more what can I do to justify my being there, like my early time with James. So I'm trying to find parts that add color and texture, besides support.

You've been a first-hand witness to much of the history of the L.A. recording scene.

Yes, and sad to say it's been on the downside for a while. I feel very blessed that I've never had to have another job besides working musician, but I have so many friends who are fabulous musicians, yet are struggling financially. There are all sorts of economic and technological reasons for the downturn. A good part of it is that when I started, record labels, as much as they were hated, had an infrastructure that signed and developed artists. My datebooks from the time are packed solid with demos and album dates. For a bunch of years, 75 percent of my work was going to people's houses by myself and overdubbing bass to their Pro Tools rigs, which really constricts you creatively. I used to joke, I never thought my career would end up by spending time in a guy's bedroom—I thought that's how you start a career! In the last few years I've done a lot more full rhythm section or band dates, which is how you make a song go to another level, so that's a positive trend. People ask if they can send me files to play on, and I have the gear here, but I'm busy enough to have never gotten around to setting it up. My whole life doesn't revolve around music. If I'm on the road, I'd rather wander around the town than sit in my hotel room doing tracks for someone. Overall, I would say it's still

a great time for creative musicians. It's just not a good time for the music business.

What's next for you?

I have Judith dates that go throughout the year. I've got some record dates coming up; I just played on two great songs for Toto's new album. And I'm excited about the prospect of making music with Phil Collins again. Basically, I find myself shocked that I just turned 67. In a youth-driven industry, I thought I'd be out to pasture by this time. There are kids sitting next to me on sessions tweeting, and I'm going through my Medicare supplements! But when the phone rings, I still get that same rush I had when I was 20. **BP**

Lee Times 20

- 1 **"You've Got a Friend,"**
James Taylor, 1971
- 2 **"Doctor My Eyes,"**
Jackson Browne, 1972
- 3 **"Doing the Meatball,"** the Section, 1972
- 4 **"I Am Woman,"** Helen Reddy, 1972
- 5 **"Stratus,"** Billy Cobham, 1973
- 6 **"Theme from Mahogany (Do You Know Where You're Going To),"**
Diana Ross, 1975
- 7 **"Sara Smile,"** Hall & Oates, 1976
- 8 **"Whenever I See Your Smiling Face,"**
James Taylor, 1977
- 9 **"Running on Empty,"**
Jackson Browne, 1977
- 10 **"It's Raining Men,"**
The Weather Girls, 1982
- 11 **"Another Day in Paradise,"**
Phil Collins, 1989
- 12 **"Don't Lose That Number" (live),**
Phil Collins, 1990
- 13 **"Better Off Dead,"**
Barefoot Servants, 1994
- 14 **"Birmingham,"** Amanda Marshall, 1996
- 15 **"Pretty Little Adriana,"** Vince Gill, 1996
- 16 **"That's Right (You're Not from Texas),"**
Lyle Lovett, 1996
- 17 **"A Thousand Miles,"**
Vanessa Carlton, 2002
- 18 **"Love in Limbo,"**
The Jeff Pryor Band, 2003
- 19 **"Stab in the Back,"**
Steve Lukather, 2008
- 20 **"You're Not Here Anymore,"**
Judith Owen, 2014

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HAVE TAKEN ON THEIR MOST FORMIDABLE CHALLENGE YET
WITH STRAVINSKY'S *THE RITE OF SPRING*.

— | **BY JON D'AURIA** | —

REID ANDERSON HAS NEVER BEEN ONE TO BACK AWAY

from a musical challenge. In fact, his entire career has been based on setting the bar so high that he is forced to evolve his playing to rise to the occasion time and time again. That seems to be at the core of his jazz trio the Bad Plus. Commanding the upright bass in a piano, drums, and bass outfit, Anderson often finds himself holding down the foundation while also having to extend himself to cover melodic and harmonic ranges—and all while improvising and soloing through uncharted terrain.

After forming in Minnesota in 2000 and moving to New York, the trio gained immediate recognition for bridging the gap between jazz and popular





JAY FRAM

From left: pianist

**Ethan Iverson,
Reid Anderson,
and drummer
David King.**

music by infusing odd time signatures, intricate phrasings, and unexpected twists into the music of artists such as Pink Floyd, Nirvana, Rush, and David Bowie. More impressive yet is their original material, which somehow dives so deep into the inner workings of conceptual jazz that it emerges from the other side as palatable hits. So, given their natural ambition, it came as no surprise that when Duke University commissioned them as their artists in residence in 2011, they decided to tackle the immensely difficult classical piece *The Rite of Spring* by Igor Stravinsky.

The end result is a masterful reinterpretation where Anderson's bass work takes command, leading drummer Dave King and pianist Ethan Iverson through the difficult and seldom-repeating charts while infusing distinct Bad Plus nuances into it. Anderson once again challenged himself by taking on roles that far exceed the bass, as his fleet finger work often mimics the melody of the horns and the ominous undertones of the string sections. And while he is known for creating tension with space, Anderson keeps his fingers continuously moving through

the rigorous 11 movements during the Bad Plus' performances of the composition.

While Anderson and company are still touring to support *The Rite of Spring*, they are beginning to move on to their next project, which is their ninth studio album of original material. Anderson's booming, natural tone sonically drives the new batch of songs, as his creative lines and unorthodox improvisation will keep listeners guessing what's coming next. But often, not even Anderson quite knows what's next. And that's exactly the way he prefers it.

How did you guys first come up with the idea to tackle *The Rite of Spring*?

Duke University does some great commissioning of jazz musicians, and that has enabled us to do larger-scale works that wouldn't usually be possible for us. It was probably because of our version of [Stravinsky's] *Apollo* that we did previously, and a few other classical compositions that we'd done in the past. The idea was actually tossed



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REID ANDERSON



CRISTINA GUADALUPE

What is your typical studio setup?

I send a direct signal through a high-quality direct box. I usually use a Demeter Tube DI. I also mic my bass as well to get another signal to add on top of it. I don't have a particular miking method that I do every time. I set it up with the engineer, and we see what the best sounds are that we can come up with. It differs with every studio session, but I feel it's best to adapt to what is available at the time.

How has your playing progressed?

I hope that I've become more of myself and have more confidence in my musical identity. In the early days there was always that voice that said, "It would be better if you sounded more like Charlie Haden." As all of us mature, we accept our own voice more and more, so hopefully that comes through in my playing.

Has your technique changed over the years?

It has stayed the same for the most part. With my left hand I try to have a solid technique in terms of how my hands are always working together to get the best sound and get the best intonation. I try to play in a way that is relaxed and in a way that is responsive to my instrument and the environment we're playing in. It's not something I'm conscious of anymore, really; it's more so just a function of what I do as a player.

What is your ideal upright bass tone?

I want it to sound as natural as possible. We do have to amplify through a direct signal, which is fine. But I like that not to be an obvious part of the sound. The more acoustic it sounds, the better it is. One thing you get from the DI is that you can accentuate the lower frequencies more. The way that you hear your sounds impacts how you translate it

out by another party for us to do *The Rite of Spring*, and it just made a lot of sense. It was incredibly intimidating because it's a tremendous amount of work, but in the end it was the definitely sexiest idea.

How did you approach this work from a bass standpoint?

I didn't approach it focusing on the bass part from the score. We're a trio of just piano, bass, and drums, so we had to conceive a way to fill out the entire score and cover its full spectrum. For me, the important part was to figure out which components I could cover with the bass. So, sometimes I was playing a French horn part or a bassoon section. I had to find the places where we could convey the piece more than figuring out what the specific bass part was for that section from an orchestration standpoint.

How was this different from the pieces you'd covered in the past?

With *The Rite of Spring* it was all about the details. Our intentions were to really play it as it is meant to be played. In the past when we do our own versions of other people's music, we have some freedom to play around, especially if we're doing something like a Nirvana tune. We improvise a little within the framework. But with *Rite of Spring* we didn't feel that we could do that and be true to it. The notes and the score and its interworkings are all so crucial, so it was a matter of paying attention to all of those details.

What was the recording process like?

We went into the studio and played it all together and did it all in record time. I think it took us about four hours total to track the whole thing. We had two days, so the first day we went in there and got the sounds, and then the next day we just went in and hit it.

INFO

LISTEN



The Bad Plus,
The Rite of Spring
[Sony Music, 2014]

EQUIP

Basses 1930s Juzek Czech upright bass

Pickup Fishman Full Circle upright pickup

Strings Gamut gut strings on D and G, Thomastik Spirocore Light strings on E and A

as well. Everyone hears things differently, and you try to manifest what you're hearing.

You often borrow basses for shows when you're out on tour.

Yes, it's *bass du jour*. I just don't fly with my bass anymore. I did it for a good ten years, and fought the good fight, but it's just not possible anymore. It's so stressful having to fight with someone at the airport every trip, and my bass got destroyed a couple of times, too. Occasionally I'll be faced with an unplayable instrument. I'm not overly picky, and all that I ask for is that it's playable. Sometimes you don't have that luxury, and that can be frustrating.

What's going on in your head when the Bad Plus is onstage?

We're all constantly responding to each other every given moment. There isn't much of a defined role in the band for each of us. We can all step in and pull the rug out from each other at any given time, or take over a lead or supportive role. It isn't a typical situation where I'm the bassist so I just have to do the bass player parts; we're all listening intensely and are trying to have a creative response to what's happening. At the same time, I'm the bass player and I love the role of the bass, so I'm not trying to *not* play that role. I guess I'm trying to fulfill that role while finding ways to respond and shape the music that is outside of what the traditional role would be.

What excites you about improvisation?

I like the mystery of it. Improvisation can get you to some serious places in a way that written music can't. I like the spontaneity and the responsibility of it, too. It's not an intellectual exercise, so you have to be emotionally engaged and not hung up on the technicalities of what you're doing.

When did you first begin playing the bass?

I started playing the acoustic bass when I was a senior in high school. I wanted to play jazz and I had been playing electric bass, and I called up a local bass teacher in Minneapolis because I wanted to take lessons, and he told me to get an upright if I wanted to play jazz. So that kind of started me off. But luckily it came pretty naturally to me.

When was the period of greatest growth for you as a player?

There have been a couple. I was in the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, which is a strictly classical music conservatory, and that was an important part in my development. Just playing my instrument and thinking about how I really wanted to play. And then of course moving to New York was a big step. When you come here you really

have to hit it, because you're surrounded by so many other great musicians who are here to be the best that they can be.

What did you learn once you entered the gigging scene?

You have to really find yourself as a musician. You have to think about what you want from music and what kind of music you ultimately want to

play. For me it's not about being the guy who gets hired for any gig. It became very clear to me that I wanted to play a certain kind of music, and I wanted to play it my way, and that was an important thing for me to realize. I wouldn't be happy getting calls to fulfill a role. I want to play with people who want to work together for the sound I create and the way I play. **BP**



The image shows a Source Audio Soundblox 2 Manta Bass Filter pedal. It has a purple faceplate with various knobs and switches. The knobs include 'DEPTH' (MIN to MAX), 'SPEED', 'MIX VOLUME', 'OPTION', and 'MOD SOURCE'. The switches include 'FREQUENCY RESONANCE', 'DRIVE TYPE', 'ENV', and 'CONTROL INPUT'. The pedal is labeled 'soundblox 2' and 'manta BASS FILTER'. Below the pedal, the text 'manta BASS FILTER' is written in a large, stylized font. At the bottom, there is a section titled 'FROM THE MASTERS OF THE FILTER PEDAL' followed by a paragraph of text about the pedal's features and Source Audio's reputation. The Source Audio logo and website are also present.

FROM THE MASTERS OF THE FILTER PEDAL

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SOUNDROOM



Marleaux M-Bass 2012 & Consat N.T.

BY JONATHAN HERRERA

IN A COUNTRY THAT ALREADY BOASTS SOME incredibly skilled luthiers, German boutique builder Marleaux is responsible for some of the nation's finest instruments. They exemplify what a custom boutique bass is all about: exquisite

wood and craftsmanship, high-end electronics, innovative and thoughtful design, and a price that's just as high as all the above would suggest. I took a look at two markedly different-looking models, the single-cut M-Bass and the neck-through



M-Bass 2012



Consat N.T.

Consat. Interestingly, the two models utilize identical wood combinations, so I was intrigued at the semi-controlled experiment into the influence of design on tone.

Fresh out of the groovy Marleaux-branded gig bag, each bass just screams expensive. The effect continues in the hand. No fret is left unfiled. No hidden corner of wood less than perfectly smooth and finished. Speaking of the wood, the two Marleauxs each flaunt some gorgeous dead tree. Both basses' deeply figured amber-stained tops come courtesy flamed pear wood—who knew the trunk

was as tasty as the fruit? Behind the tops are alder bodies. The pear wood reappears on the basses' rear, with the control cavity and battery covers (the M-Bass's battery is in the control cavity) incorporating the top wood, presenting a handsome visual contrast to the much more modest alder. Thick slabs of dyed ebony are used for the fingerboards, and the headstocks each get a top-matching pear wood veneer.

The construction, hardware, and finish of the basses were faultless. Beautiful details abound, from the brass ferrules for the control-cavity cover

S SPECIFICATIONS

MARLEAUX

Consat N.T.

Street \$5,100

Pros Perfect construction; beautiful look; superb balanced tone

Cons None

M Bass 2012

Street \$5,100

Pros Flawless fit-and-finish; gorgeous; sweet and supple midrange

Cons Concentric knobs for bass and treble make adjustment a little tricky

Contact www.marleaux-bass.com

SPECS

Construction Neck-through (Consat); set-neck (M-Bass)

Top Pear wood

Body Alder

Neck Five-piece maple/ebony

Fingerboard Ebony

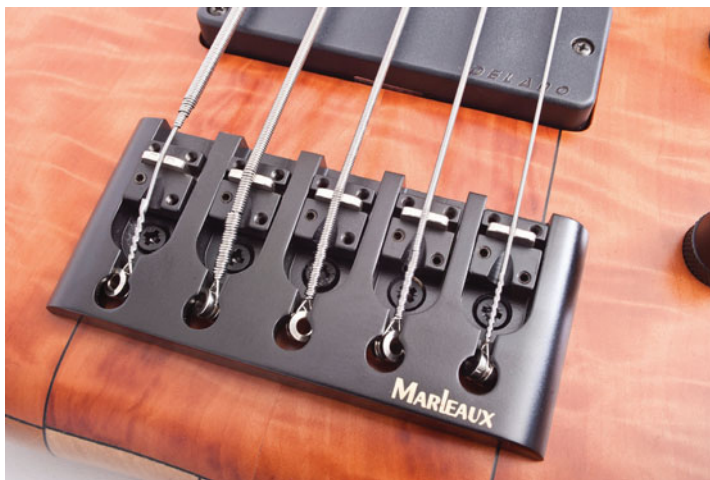
Scale length 34"

Pickups Delano quadcoil

Hardware Schaller tuners; Marleaux bridge

Weight 8.6 lbs (Consat); 9.1 lbs (M-Bass)

Made in Germany



screws to the unique knobs to the perfectly sculpted complex body contours. I was especially enamored of the bridge, which is made specially for Marleaux by ETS (another small German company). It has a solid heft, an intricate stable system for locking down the saddles, and an easy-release for the strings' ball ends. Plus it just looks cool, if you're into beautifully machined metal.

Each bass differs substantially in its construction. The M-Bass is a single-cut with a set neck, while the Consat is a traditional neck-through with a more conventional dual-cutaway design. Playability was excellent on each instrument, although I'd give a slight nod to the M-Bass. The Consat felt chunkier overall, with a slightly deeper profile neck and a more massive

body. The M-Bass, by contrast, felt a little more lithe and supple. It also balanced better, requiring minimal left-hand effort to keep it supported.

Delano makes the Marleaux's pickups, but the company builds its own preamp. The Consat uses Delano quadcoil pickups and a BC3 preamp. The well-voiced EQ has a gentle 6dB/octave slope, which helps make even relatively extreme settings musical and not overly dramatic. The M-Bass's V2 preamp is a bit more intriguing; it matches a bass/treble EQ with a passive tone control and also provides 3-position switches for each pickup to choose between humbucking in parallel, single-coil, or humbucking in series modes. Also, the preamp's treble control is not a shelving highpass filter as is normally the case, but rather a broad high-frequency bandpass filter that tapers before it reaches the highest frequencies. The effect is that boosting the treble doesn't result in excessively edgy bite, while cutting it darkens the tone, but retains a little clarity to cut through. I do have a few qualms with the implementation of the M Bass's preamp, though. First, the tone control is only available when the bass is in passive mode.

As someone who really digs tone controls on active basses (F Bass and Fodera have them, for example), I'd like to see it available in both modes. Also, bass and treble adjustments are made via a concentric knob. This is generally okay, but the ring for low-end adjustment on the M-Bass is so small in comparison to the treble knob that making adjustments is a little finicky.

I played a few gigs on each bass, as well as recording a couple tracks at my home studio. The Consat sounded more broad, with deep lows, a clear and precise B string, and shimmering but throaty highs. Its bridge pickup tone is punchy, but not in an aggressive J-Bass style. Blended, the Consat is a *killing* slap bass. I especially dug the Consat's consistent string-to-string clarity—chords and quick melodic passages all rang with exceptional pitch definition and balance. The M-Bass is a different sort of animal, and again, one I preferred. Rather than the full-on sonic breadth of the Consat, the M-Bass sounded richer, darker, and more colorful. I loved its syrupy midrange; I felt inspired to play sweet and dynamic lines. It also can growl with the best of them, especially with the bridge pickup soloed in the series humbucking mode. The M-Bass also had an excellent slap sound, but something about its construction and buttery mids made me eschew that technique in favor of fingerstyle and palm-muting.

Either way you slice it, the Marleauxs are stunning basses. Each ably demonstrates the kind of attention to detail and thoughtfulness that one would expect from a boutique builder. Whether you dig the all-around utility of the Consat, or the more midrange-focused M-Bass, you can't really make a bad choice here. **BP**

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B4 20th Anniversary Bass

Rithimic

Cort B4 20th Anniversary & Rithimic

BY ED FRIEDLAND

WHILE CORT CONTINUES TO GAIN TRACTION

in the brand-cluttered guitar/bass universe, in fact the company has been building import instruments for several well-established brands for many years. No names please, but it's not a stretch to say you've probably played and dug a Cort-built instrument without realizing it. With a large catalog of offerings, the Cort bass lineup is varied in both design and price range, but these two new offerings are notable in that one is a limited-edition anniversary model, and one is a new signature axe built for Jeff Berlin.

B4 YOU 'CUSE ME

The B4 is a member of Cort's Artisan series, a group of basses that follow the "Hyper J-Bass" platform. The body shape brings to mind a Fender Jazz that has been artfully carved to accommodate a 24-fret neck. The A models (there is also an A5 20th Anniversary model) are more premium-featured instruments, with "hippie-sandwich" through-body construction and higher-end electronics. The B series are solid, mid-level bolt-on instruments that cost significantly less. The 20th Anniversary B4 distinguishes itself with a lightweight, grain-enhanced



swamp-ash body that looks very sexy with its gloss finish, and an African wenge fingerboard—an exotic hardwood usually found on more expensive instruments.

Like the standard B4 model, the 20th Anniversary bass has a five-piece, 24-fret wenge/rosewood neck. It's powered by two Bartolini MK1 pickups and 3-band EQ, with passive bypass activated by a mini-toggle. The black Hipshot Ultralight tuners and A-style bridge are dependable choices, while

S SPECIFICATIONS

CORT

B4 20th Anniversary Bass

Street \$560

Pros Attractive, comfortable, versatile

Cons Top-heavy tone

Bottom Line Looks and feels sweet, a solid offering in its price range.

Rhythmic

Street \$1,200

Pros Clear voice

Cons Pickup blend sounds honky, neck profile not for everyone

Bottom Line A well-built axe with a unique look, sound, and feel.

Contact cortguitars.com

SPECS

B4 20th Anniversary Bass

Construction Bolt-on

Body Swamp ash

Neck Five-piece wenge/rosewood

Fingerboard Wenge

Radius 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ "

Pickups 2 Bartolini MK-1 humbuckers

Preamp Bartolini MK-1 3-band, boost/cut

Controls Volume, blend, treble, mid, bass, passive switch

Tuners Hipshot Ultralight

Nut Graphite

Neck width at nut 1.5"

Bridge Cort

Frets 24

Made in Indonesia

Rhythmic

Construction Bolt-on

Body Alder

Top Padauk/spalted maple

Neck Hard maple

Fingerboard Rosewood

Radius 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ "

Pickups 2 Bartolini Jeff Berlin custom soapbars

Controls Volume, blend, tone

Tuners Hipshot Ultralight

Nut Black TUSQ

Neck width at nut 1.5"

Bridge Babicz FCH4

Frets 21

Strings DR Strings DDT (.040–.100)

Made in Indonesia

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SOUNDRoom

the sculpted neck heel and countersunk neck bolts are typical of the features Cort builds into other companies' instruments.

RITHIMIC TRAINING

Jeff Berlin is no stranger to BP readers, and those who have followed his career will notice that the Rithimic's basic platform is similar to his previous signature models with other manufacturers. The eye-catching veneer of padauk and spalted maple blends in beautifully with the alder body, and the spalted-maple headstock cap is the *coup de grace* that makes the Rithimic a visual showstopper. The lower cutaway affords excellent access to the "no money zone." Carved to Berlin's specifications, the neck has a super-slim J-style profile, and a 15 $\frac{3}{4}$ " fingerboard radius that makes advanced techniques like chordal playing left-hand friendly. The gold-colored hardware package looks snazzy against the multi-grain top, and paired with the ubiquitous Hipshot Ultralight tuners is a Babicz bridge—a piece of hardware that is winning followers for its elegantly sturdy and functional design.

The Rithimic has two Bartolini Jeff Berlin passive humbuckers spaced widely apart, with a simple volume/blend/tone control panel. The pickup placement is a key element to the instrument's signature tone, and Berlin has been working these territories since he first modified his old Fender P-Bass with two "Hi-A" (Bartolini's first brand name) pickups in the 1970s. The neck pickup is approximately 7.25" center-to-center from the string saddle, which is .25" closer to the neck than an early-'50s Fender single-coil P-Bass. The bridge pickup is smack dab in '70s J-Bass turf.

CORT IN SESSION

Testing both axes in my "scream parlor" through a Genz Benz Shuttle 9.2 and Greenboy Audio F112, they represented two completely different tone spectrums. The B4 has the tight, compressed bite I've experienced with other wenge-neck instruments, and the MK-1 pickups have a bright response that places this instrument firmly in the modern palette. In passive mode, the output is respectable, but the lack of a passive tone control means you'll have to warm up the sound at the amp. A loud pop accompanied my switching into active mode, but the preamp definitely gives the instrument the ability to produce a wide range of useful tones. The neck is slim and fast-playing; the body is well balanced and sits



B4 20th Anniversary Bass in black

comfortably on a strap. There are many basses of this type on the market (many undoubtedly built by Cort), but the B4 20th Anniversary model is an attractive, competent alternative to other instruments in its sub-\$600 price range.

The Rithimic is another beast entirely, both in concept and price point. As a passive instrument with a complex tone, playing through high-quality amplification is the best way to appreciate it. The front pickup has great *oomph* that could be tailored for any number of styles that require big, fat bass, while the bridge pickup has the clean, articulate voice that is Mr. Berlin's calling card. Blending the two pickups together produces a mid-scooped tone that first led me to think the pickups may have been wired out of phase from each other. But closer inspection showed no faults—the wide spacing between the pickups creates a bit of a hollow, nasal quality that reminds me a bit of a two-pickup Danelectro, or a Lakland Jerry Scheff model. The neck profile is skinny and rounded in back, but the flatter fingerboard took a little getting used to. For the soloistic and chordal playing Berlin does, it makes sense, but



The Rithimic's pickups are set farther apart.



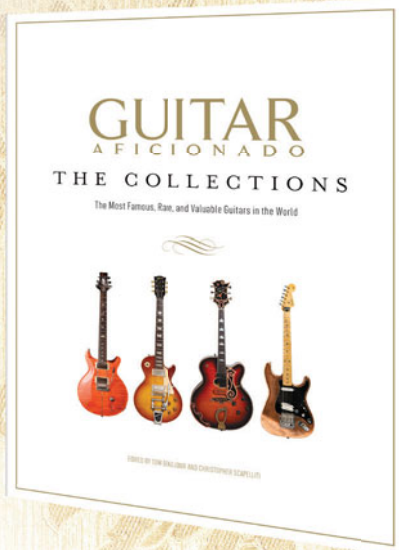
The Rithimic's Babicz "Full Contact Hardware" bridge

if you're a low-slung rocker, you may find a smaller (rounder) fingerboard radius more to your comfort. I liked the sound of the pickups individually, and the blend control made it simpler to dial in the sweet spot for each one. Favoring the bridge pickup produces a singing texture that works great for upper-register soloing, but rolling forward to the neck pickup with the tone slightly lowered gives a creamy, open tone that fills out the bottom nicely. I never warmed up to the tone of both pickups blended; there is a five percent attenuation at the center of the blend, and combined with the complex nature of the overtones present, it felt lacking. The Rithimic's neck profile is designed specifically to Berlin's taste, and while I found it uncomfortable, if you like a slim neck with a large radius, it may be just right for you.

There are signature models that are nothing more than a stock instrument with the artist's favorite paint job, but the Rithimic is the result of many years of refining the preferences of a very particular player. If you dig Jeff Berlin's sound, approach, and style of playing, the Rithimic will put you in the ballpark—at least equipment-wise. **BP**

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	California V-series	rawwood	brownburst		
	Custom series	natural	cream		
	Partner series		lake placid blue		
			marley blue		
			metallic red		
			nature		
			tobacco-sunburst	swamp ash	
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ESP LTD RB-1004SM

BY JONATHAN HERRERA

THE MT. RUSHMORE OF BASS PROBABLY HAS A few more faces than the four on the real one, and arguing who should be on it would make for an excellent barroom debate—but there are a few sure-things, and Rocco Prestia is undoubtedly one. The long-time Tower Of Power bassman has an immediately recognizable voice on the instrument: percolating 16th-notes that seem inhumanly locked to the equally bubbly syncopated drumming of David Garibaldi. His tone, bouncing under funk classics like “What Is Hip?” and “Soul Vaccination,” is no less distinctive than his style. His extraordinarily well-controlled fretting-hand muting combines with the big-bottom thump of a P-Bass for a sound that’s thick, round, and short on sustain. It’s a key ingredient in TOP’s complex uptempo funk.

Rocco parted ways with Fender some time ago, and his latest instrument is a far cry from the P-Bass of yore. Sure, it’s got four strings and a P pickup, but that’s where the similarities end. The ESP LTD RB-1004SM (um, how ’bout a snappier name, ESP?) is an ornate active bass with a figured maple top, opalescent inlays, unusual pickup placement, and extensively contoured body. Given all these qualities, I was excited to see not only if it were capable of that distinctive Rocco thump, but perhaps a little more, too.

The LTD is an immediately striking bass. The oval mother-of-pearl inlays positively sparkle in the right light, and the thick spalted-maple top and matching headstock are the sort of visual cues one might associate with basses costing much more. The instrument’s stretched-out, pointy proportions might not be for everyone, but there’s no denying that it cuts a distinctive profile. The neck also gets a high-end flourish, composed of alternating laminates of maple and walnut. Laminated necks are said to diminish vulnerability to shifting, and I noticed none in my time with the instrument.

The LTD is also blessed with some handsome “black nickel” hardware, and it’s high-quality stuff with tuners by Grover and a Gotoh bridge. The bridge also includes facility for through-body stringing, which some believe improves resonance and sustain. The LTD’s fit-and-finish was good, but not flawless. A couple of the oval side-position markers were a little rough, and there was a noticeable gap in the neck pocket. Removing the cavity cover revealed a fairly sloppy installation with a lot of excess wire length and a free-floating Aguilar OBP-2 preamp. Fortunately, the cavity cover was well coated in conductive shielding paint to prevent radio-frequency interference.

Aguilar is responsible for the preamp, but it also makes the



pickups. ESP employed the AG 4PJ-HC set for the bass, which supplements a '60s-style P pickup with a hum-cancelling J-style pickup. My only quibble is with the LTD's knob arrangement. First, the whole four-knob cluster is too far rearward, making for an overlong reach to the volume knob. Second, the blend knob, parallel to the volume and closest to the bridge, is too far for a quick on-the-fly adjustment. A simple solution would have been switching the knobs, making the volume/blend row closer to the neck, not vice versa as in the current arrangement. [ESP Responds: "Rocco was very involved with the functionality of this instrument, and had much to do with where the knobs are positioned. Rocco Prestia's expertise ... trumps our opinions pretty much any day of the week."]

The RB-1004 is super comfortable to play. It's light and svelte; all those contours worked their magic in my lap or on a strap. It has a quite shallow C-profile neck and a big neck radius, i.e., a fairly flat fingerboard. The bass also employs a remarkably thin neck joint for a bolt-on, making upper-range access a breeze. These factors combine to make the LTD an easy instrument to play fast. Fans of chunky P-style meat-and-potatoes necks best look elsewhere.

I played the RB-1004 through several rigs and in my home studio. With the P pickup soloed, the bass is seriously fat. So fat, in fact, that it's downright surprising given the otherwise slim-and-trim vibe the bass gives off. Rolling back the treble a bit accentuated the booty even further, and I really dug palm-muting and laying deep into a groove.

The bridge pickup, on the other hand, is a bit of an oddity. It's pokey and punchy as all get out, but it's also lacking enough supportive low-end response to give that punchiness authority. The fault is not in the pickup, though; I suspect it's the placement. The LTD puts the "bridge" in bridge pickup—it's really close. A standard '70s Jazz Bass bridge pickup positions the polepieces about 6mm away from the saddle, give or take a little depending on intonation. The slanted layout of the LTD's J-pickup puts the *E* string's polepiece at just 45mm from the saddle and the *G* string's at about 50mm. Given the huge impact that placement has on a pickup's frequency response, I believe this is leading to the bass-shy response. [ESP Responds: "This is a purposeful design aspect that came directly from Rocco. He primarily plays the P pickup and blends in the J for the occasional top-end boost."] When the pickups are blended, however, the bass has a pleasantly hollow and sizzly vibe, with that same big bottom, but with a little more upper-midrange thrust and high-end snap.

The LTD is an interesting bass. It looks sexy, if glitz and glam are your thing. Knob placement aside, it's also a real joy to interact with, particularly if you want to get around quickly on a bass. Our test instrument had a few construction issues—nothing major, but in some ways, its boutique look belies a few of the measures any manufacturer must take to keep a bass like this affordable. All in all, the RB-1004 is a fine bass with a host of intriguing design elements and a genuinely booty-full neck-pickup tone. **BP**

S SPECIFICATIONS

LTD RB-1004SM

Street \$1,200

Pros Pretty design flourishes; fast neck; huge neck-pickup sound

Cons Sloppy control cavity; awkward knob placement; thin-sounding bridge pickup

Contact espguitars.com

Construction Bolt-on

Body Swamp ash

Neck Five-piece maple/walnut

Fingerboard Maple

Scale length 34"

Pickups Aguilar AG 4P-60/J-HC set

Hardware Grover tuners; Gotoh bridge

Weight 7.3 lbs

Made in Korea



TECHBENCH

VOICES

Brady Muckelroy

BY ED FRIEDLAND

THERE IS A NATURAL TENACITY BUILT INTO THE

Texas psyche that can manifest in interesting ways. In the case of Austin-based luthier Brady Muckelroy, it took form in his decision to build high-end custom basses in a town where 80 percent of the gigs are played on a Fender Precision, the other 20 percent being played on a Jazz Bass. But after only three years in business, “Mucks” are showing up with great frequency in this once bastion of bass traditionalism, and have made their way across the U.S. and beyond.

The artistic quality and soul of a skillfully hand-built instrument is a tangible thing to most high-end bass freaks—but when the builder plays bass as well as Brady Muckelroy, the instrument is crafted from a perspective few luthiers have. In addition to laying down the solid, supportive playing that almost pays the rent in Austin, Muckelroy is a skilled practitioner of the art of solo bass. He seamlessly blends chords, harmonics, tapping, slapping, muting, and blistering lines, with the fluidity and musicality that draws comparison to such solo players as Michael Manring, Trip Wamsley, and Steve Lawson. “To pull off what I was trying to do musically, I had to get really good at setting up my own bass,” says Brady. “Things had to be just right.” As his setup skills sharpened, requests started to come in from players who wanted their bass to play like his.

Eventually outgrowing his home-based workspace, Muckelroy was invited by old friend Scott Beckwith (owner of Birdsong Guitars and builder of the revamped SD Curlee line) to move into the San Marcos, Texas shop where his real woodworking education began. While continuing to do his setup work, Brady learned more about the trade with the guidance of Beckwith and head luthier Jake Goede. But his entry into custom building was more a product of necessity than inspiration. “It never occurred to me to build my own instruments, but at one point, we hit a financial rough patch, and I had to sell all of my basses,” he says. “I was surviving playing on a borrowed P-Bass, but I started to get encouragement from my buddies to just build something.” With Goede’s mentorship, Brady built his first bass. “It was my first take on what is now my Ensemble Bass, which I’ve refined quite a bit since then. But the crazy thing was, that first bass worked! I gigged and

recorded with that thing for a year.” While Brady acknowledges a certain degree of luck, he also attributes the modest success of his first build to his player’s perspective. “Every stage of a build is critical, but in particular, while working on the pitch of the neck, leveling the fingerboard, and the fretwork, I kept thinking about how it would serve me as a player—how it would function. It wasn’t perfect, but the flaws taught me a lot.” In the middle of building his next two basses, an unusual opportunity arose to build an instrument commissioned by the Texas Music Educators Association, to be given to talk show host Mike Huckabee. “That bass was complex; it had a three-piece body with accent laminates and a top, set-neck construction—it was pretty fancy. I don’t watch the show, but people tell me they’ve seen him play it.”

At this point, Brady has built well over 100 instruments for Birdsong and Curlee, as well as 60 custom builds since opening Muckelroy Basses in 2011—a prodigious output for a relative newcomer, and all hand-built. “I never rush a build, but I hustle. There’s a fine balance between the two.” His instruments are based on five different original designs: the Ensemble, the Solo, the Bernal, the HMC (single-cut option available), and upon request, the Charger, a 32”-scale model. While the body shapes are set, each model can be built with neck-through, bolt-on, or set-neck construction, any type of pickup configuration, and choice of woods. Details like fret size, fingerboard radius, and the number of strings are also open for discussion. “When someone comes in and they don’t really know what they want, we talk. I ask them what style they play, how many strings they want, what color, the weight of the instrument. Usually, from that I can get them where they want to be.” While a 34” scale is standard, his time building Birdsong’s custom high-end short-

scale basses has given him insight into smaller scale lengths. I personally have played one of his 32”-scale 5-strings and was confounded by the depth and clarity of the low B. When pressed for the recipe, Brady states, “The headstock back angle, break-over angle at the bridge, as well as strings through the body really help get the most low end out of the shorter scale.” He also builds 35”-scale instruments on request.



INFO

MUCKELROY
BASSES

Builder

Brady Muckelroy

Base Austin, Texas

Contact

bradybass.com



While working mainly with Delano, Aguilar, Nordstrand, and Kent Armstrong custom pickups, the in-house-designed/Dave McKeen-built Muckelroy preamp is the preferred active circuit for his basses. “I’ve played just about everything out there, and I’ll install whatever a customer wants, but my philosophy is that with the tone controls set flat, the bass should sound like it’s passive. That’s what my preamp does—set flat, it doesn’t color the tone, but you get a +3dB boost.” The 18-volt system is 3-band, with 18dB of boost/cut centered at 40Hz for the lows, 560Hz for the mids, and “just under 7kHz” for the highs. “The way the lows are set, as you boost past halfway, it’s still usable. The bandwidth gets narrower—it has a steeper slope, and it’s not pulling up that stuff in the lower midrange.” The Muckelroy preamp is available separately and will fit in most basses.

I’ve had the unique opportunity to check out Brady’s work throughout his relatively short career as a luthier. Early on, he would bring his newest builds up to the now-closed Bass Emporium (where I was teaching) to get feedback. I played most of his first instruments and saw his design and wood-working skills improve. What impressed me even back then was the “life force” his instruments seemed to have. I remember playing one of those early basses and being floored by the feel and responsiveness—to my ear, it sounded every bit as good as any high-end custom bass I’d played. While I regret not buying that one on the spot, in the years that have passed, the instruments coming out of his shop hit

that mark with great consistency. When my trusty late-’90s Carvin LB75 finally gave out after 15 years of being strung up to piccolo tension, Brady was the obvious choice to build me a new one. As a former Carvin player himself, he knew the neck profile I wanted, and as a cutting-edge bassist in his own right, I figured he would understand exactly what a piccolo bass is and what it’s supposed to do. The end result was a 33”-scale alder version of his HMC model, with a single Nordstrand Fat Stack in the neck position. Besides being a feathery seven pounds, the instrument sits perfectly positioned on my body, and has amazing access to all frets. The 33” scale proved a huge benefit to the chordal approach I focus on with this axe, and it makes single lines so easy to play, I have to remind myself to slow down. But with that ease, I can feel the instrument issuing a challenge: “I’m ready—can you handle it?” Two top bassists playing Muckelroys these days are Yoggie Musgrove (Stephen Bruton, Ian MacLagen, Marcia Ball, Malford Milligen, Bob Schneider), who is regularly seen playing his single-cut Ensemble 6-string, and David Piggott (Monte Montgomery), who has sold all his other basses and is having his fourth Muckelroy HMC built—the name he chose himself, standing for “High Maintenance Client.”

Brady has recently taken full charge of the shop he once shared with Birdsong, and he’s focused on bringing more of his custom creations to life, in addition to continuing to build short-scale Birdsongs and SD Curlees on a contract basis. **BP**



Brady Muckelroy



GEEK SPEAK

The Why of DI

BY JONATHAN HERRERA

I VAGUELY RECALL WHEN I REALIZED THAT A DI WAS an essential bit of bass technology. It was sometime around my first gig at a club. The sound guy, who had spent the last 45 minutes carefully miking drums, hurriedly came up to me and asked if my amp had a DI or if I needed one. I had no clue what he meant, so I just blinked and anxiously hoped he would answer his own question for me. Perhaps recognizing my adolescent ignorance, he peeked at the back of my rig, saw the XLR jack, and saved me further shame. Then I started playing a bit. I was louder than I'd ever been, each note blanketing the room in a deeply satisfying layer of bass-y goodness. I was in the house for the first time, and I was hooked, all thanks to this mysterious DI thing.

Since then, I've learned a thing or two, and given how indispensable DIs are to bass playing, so should you. In their most basic form, DIs perform a few vital functions. They: (1) Lower the instrument's output impedance, (2) convert an instrument- or line-level signal to mic level, and (3) convert an unbalanced instrument output to balanced.

Let's dive into what all this means, starting with lowering output impedance. To understand impedance, it's necessary to understand electrical resistance. In a simple circuit consisting of a battery and a resistor, the resistor will resist the current flowing

from the battery—the higher the resistor's value, the greater its resistance to current. As a result, there is a voltage drop between one side of the resistor and the other. Since the power source in our simple circuit is a battery, its output is direct current (DC), meaning it has a steady amplitude and goes in only one direction. The audio from a bass, however, is alternating current (AC). As opposed to DC, AC varies in amplitude over time (this variation is what defines the frequency) and alternates between positive and negative cycles. Essentially, the signal alternates direction through a circuit. In an AC circuit, several other factors beyond resistance are influential, importantly inductance and capacitance. Unlike resistance, which uniformly resists the flow of current, inductive and capacitive parts of a circuit resist the flow of current, but the amount of this resistance varies according to the frequency of the AC signal's fluctuations. To reflect the complex influence of resistors, capacitors, and inductors on a signal, we use the term "impedance." Output impedance measures the way another electronic device "sees" the impedance at the instrument's output. Similarly, input impedance measures the impedance to a signal as represented at a component's input. Suffice it to say that a low-impedance signal is better suited to longer cable runs, because a high-impedance signal will lose more high frequencies to

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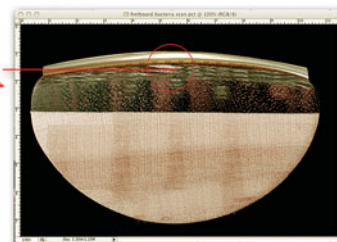
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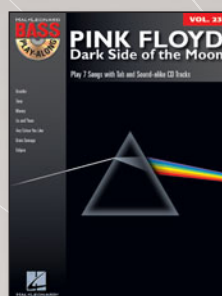
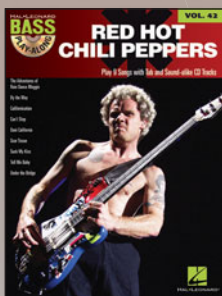
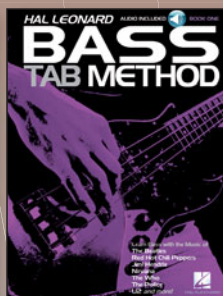
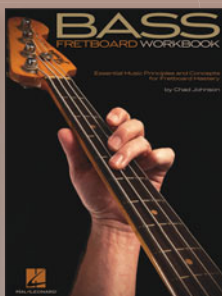
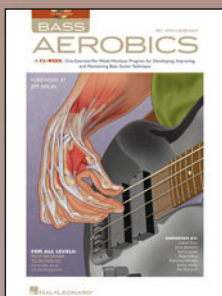


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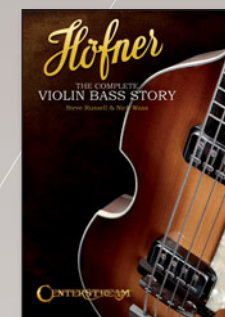
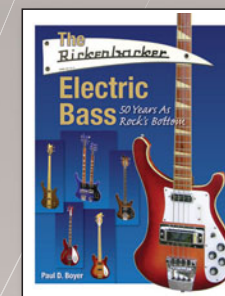
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the cable. (In both cases, this loss is proportional to the cable's length.) Also, the inputs of most mixers are designed to accept the low-impedance output of a microphone. Thus, a DI makes the high-impedance output of your bass better suited to running a long cable *and* makes your signal appropriate for input into a mixer. All important stuff when you play live or in a studio.

To accommodate the extraordinary diversity of instrument, microphone, and mixer types, the audio industry has long employed standards for the levels of different audio signals. In this case, the "level" of a signal refers to its AC voltage, although the unit of measure in this case is the decibel (dB), which describes the output of a signal relative to a fixed reference voltage. Microphones have the lowest level, keyboards and the outputs of preamps operate at a relatively high level referred to as "line" level, and instruments like the bass have wide-ranging output levels that fall somewhere between mic and line levels. Professional audio mixers, such as those used in a club or studio, are designed to accept mic-level inputs. Thus, another important function of a DI box is to convert the instrument-level output of a bass (or the line-level output of a keyboard) into a mic-level output appropriate for a mixing console.

As if all of the above weren't impressive enough, DI boxes have another important trick up their sleeve. By converting the "unbalanced" output of a bass to a "balanced" output, a DI makes your signal less vulnerable to noise. Here's why: The typical instrument cable consists of two conducting elements, a central "hot" conductor surrounded by a braided "shield." The output of your pickups travels along the hot conductor, and the shield serves as the ground, i.e., the return path that completes

the audio circuit. While the shield does offer some protection from radio frequency (RF) interference and low-frequency interference (the hum that an AC power line may induce in a signal cable), it's not very effective. The unbalanced line is especially vulnerable when it's longer than about 15 feet. To remedy this, a balanced cable uses two conductors and a shield that's connected to ground, but not essential as a signal conductor. A DI box takes the unbalanced line from a bass and splits it into two out-of-phase signals, sending each down one of the two conductors. As the signal travels down the cable, it picks up the same interference that an ordinary unbalanced line would. The magic comes at the input of the mixer, where the signals are once again phase-reversed (bringing your bass back into phase) and then combined. Since any interference picked up along the cable run is identical in both conductors, this noise—once it's phase-reversed and combined at the mixer—gets knocked out. It's a concept similar to humbucking pickups, where noise enters the system in phase and then gets eliminated when combined out-of-phase. The standard jack type for balanced signals is XLR, although sometimes 1/4" TRS cables are used.

Considering all the geekiness above, it's hard to imagine that there's even more going on in the average direct box. There are both passive and active types, wide-ranging approaches to design, electrical-isolation benefits, and the whole "ground-lift" thing. Space dictates we address this stuff in an upcoming installment. Nevertheless, I hope the next time you stick a XLR into the back of your amp, or gratefully accept that little black box from the sound guy, you take a moment to appreciate the marvelous little bit of engineering involved. **BP**

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Studio Oddities

Sight-Reading In The Studio, Part 3

BY JOHN GOLDSBY

IN MY LAST TWO WOODSHED COLUMNS, WE LOOKED AT TYPICAL LINES

that a studio bassist should be able to sight-read. Working in a studio situation is rewarding, and the necessary sight-reading skills can be practiced and learned. But even the most experienced bassist feels a few drops of sweat beading on his forehead when confronted with dense rhythms, tricky melodies, changing time signatures, and odd meters.

This month, let's look at some challenging parts that have recently landed on my music stand at studio jobs. **Example 1** shows the last few bars of a samba chart. I often see parts filled with chord changes, which are punctuated by occasional notated licks, lines, and fills. The challenge is to play a groove over chord symbols, change gears, and transition seamlessly into the notated line.

Notice the five articulations that are used over certain notes in this passage. The symbol " $\geq$ " over the note *B* in bar 3 indicates that the note is both accented and played legato for its full length. This articulation is called a legato accent. On beat *two* in bar 3, the *E* is capped with a " $\wedge$ ". This capped accent is accented and played short. The last note in bar 4 is played with an accent, indicated by the $>$ marking. Since this accent is tied to the next note in bar 5, there is no need to indicate a legato accent ($\geq$). The staccato marking, a dot over the note *B* in bar 6, indicates that the note should be played short. The fermata or "bird's eye" over the last note indicates that it should be held out until the conductor, drummer, singer—or whoever is paying you!—gives a cutoff.

Example 2 never offers the luxury of a played downbeat, and is peppered with little landmines and trapdoors in the form of eighth- and 16th-note rests. Practice tip: Tap your foot in quarter-notes at a very slow tempo, and clap or sing the rhythms. Don't try to play the line on the bass until you can sing the rhythms in tempo. Be sure to count all the way through the last bar, and nail the low *E* on the "and" of beat *three*. In the studio, there are few things worse than screwing up the last note, because that's what people remember.

Bass parts in mixed meters are found in all types of classical, jazz, and even pop music. Artists like the Beatles ("All You Need Is Love," and "Here Comes the Sun"), Adele ("Turning Tables"), and composers like Burt Bacharach ("Promises, Promises," and "I'll Say a Little Prayer for You") sometimes use combinations of 4/4, 3/4, and 2/4 to create flowing melodic and harmonic progressions. **Example 3** shows a line mixing 4/4 and 5/4 meters. When I'm confronted with long strings of notes in changing meters, I concentrate on keeping a flow and playing the note values and rests precisely. If I think too much about the changing meters, I get hung up on the mathematics of the notation. Practice tip: Tap your foot in quarter-notes, and sing or clap through the line without thinking about where the meters change.

Sometimes I see bass parts and wonder why something isn't written out differently—like **Ex. 4**, which has a bar of 3/4 followed by a bar of 5/4. This passage could have easily been written as two bars of 4/4. However, in the studio there usually isn't time to question a composer's intent. Grilling the composer, arranger, or producer, and complaining about how something is written, can make you come off like a know-it-all prima donna. Maybe you do know it all, but you don't have to act like it, especially in the studio when the producer is bleeding money. Just shut up, play the part, and make it sound good.

In addition to mixed-meter bass parts, odd-meter charts also show up on the music

INFO

In July, John will be teaching all things bass on two continents: at both the Jamey Aebersold Summer Jazz Workshops in Louisville, and the Sligo Jazz Workshop in Ireland. Visit him on the web for sound samples, videos, and answers to all of your bass-related questions. johngoldsbys.com

JOHN GOLDSBY

CONNECT

- Hear and play along with Examples 1–6.
- Want to master reading odd time signatures? Preview master drummer Louis Bellson's *Odd Time Reading Text: For All Instruments* [Alfred Music Publishing].
- Check out studio bass master Jerry Jemmott and drummer Roger Hawkins laying down the changing meters on Aretha Franklin's version of "I'll Say a Little Prayer for You." (The verse is in 4/4 with one 2/4 bar, while the chorus is in 11/4—two bars of 4/4, one bar of 3/4.) bassplayer.com/ july2014



EX. 1

Samba
♩ = 118 Em6/9 Cm6/9 Em6/9

12 12 12 11 9 9 8 7 7 7 9 7 9 7 6

6 5 8 7 9 0

EX. 2

Latin
♩ = 124

4 5 2 4 7 6 4 7 4 5 4 6 6 4 6 7 6 5 5 4 5 5 6 9 9 6 6 4 4 2

Fine

EX. 3

Straight-eighth feel
♩ = 150

0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

EX. 4

Straight-eighth feel
♩ = 120

2 4 2 5 7 7 5 3 5 3 6 8 8 7 3 3 2

3 2 5 4



stand, often for fusion, jazz, and world-music projects. **Examples 5 and 6** are typical grooves from Eastern Europe. These bass lines both follow a *clave*, or underlying rhythmic pulse. The challenge when playing an odd-meter world-music groove is to make it sound like you're just as much at home in 11/8 as you are in 4/4. Practice tip: Count the groupings of eighth-notes, and lock in the repeated figures. Feel the pulse as combinations of groups of two or three eighth-notes.

How can you deal with so much written information at once, especially when

reading through a chart for the first time? Sight-reading skills are honed through experience. If you want to train yourself to read fly footprints at first glance, then you should practice reading music every day. Revisit the May and June '14 issues for more sight-reading tips. Until next time, keep your eyes glued to the page and your ears wide open. **BP**

Balkan feeling

♩ = 138

EX. 5

Rhythmic subdivision: 4 + 3 + 4

Balkan feeling

♩ = 180

EX. 6

Rhythmic subdivision: 2 + 2 + 3 / 2 + 3 / 2 + 3

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BLUES YOU CAN USE

The Return of Jack Meyers

One Room Country Shack

BY ED FRIEDLAND

IN MY NEVER-ENDING SEARCH FOR BLUES

bass performances that break the mold, it was only a matter of time until I returned to the work of Jack Meyers, the iconoclastic bassist featured in the March '13 Blues You Can Use. In that column, we examined some of Meyers' scary/crazy ideas over a slow Buddy Guy blues called "I Had a Dream Last Night." To this day, his playing on that track haunts and disturbs me to the core. From my own experiences playing the blues with artists such as Johnny Adams, Mighty Sam McClain, Robert Junior Lockwood, Delbert McClinton, Paul Rishell, and Annie Raines, I can't imagine getting away with that. In my attempts to make sense out of Jack Meyers' playing, I reached out to his old employer and drinking buddy, blues harmonica legend Charlie Musselwhite. I asked him a few questions, and while I didn't get much insight on his musical approach, I did get a sense of the man behind the notes.

Charlie couldn't confirm or deny my theory that Meyers was an upright player who found the Fender so easy to play that he indulged himself with chops. "I don't recall him ever mentioning the upright," Musselwhite says. "I remember him saying he learned C clef, so I'm pretty sure he studied music at some point." When asked if Meyers practiced much, Charlie told me, "Maybe a little—seems like we talked about music a lot,

and since we were gigging all the time, that would take the place of practice. Practice on the gig." I asked what his (and others') reactions were to Meyers' unorthodox approach. "I don't remember anyone complaining about his playing. Everybody thought he was way cool. Here's a story—we'd sit around the kitchen table in the mornings and drink, and for some reason, Jack got a kick out of watching [kids' television show] *Captain Kangaroo*, to the point where he would throw in the theme song on his solos. I'd give Jack solos just to see what he'd come up with, because there was always crazy, twisted stuff coming out, with great humor." Charlie ended by saying, "I loved to give him plenty of room to do what he wanted." While I still don't know the "why" behind Jack Meyers' musical concept, I've resigned myself to simply accepting it for what it is—a shining example of originality, backed up by a whole mess of nerve. (If you remember, I elected Meyers to the presidency of the 5B club—Blues Bassists with Big Brass Balls.)

This month's example, which came to me via reader request (keep those cards and letters coming, folks), is way more straightforward than our first look at Meyers' playing. The track is "One Room Country Shack" from the 1968 Buddy Guy release *A Man and the Blues*. While Meyers does stick to a repetitive line on this classic *G* minor blues over a slow 12/8 groove, it's a doozy! Right



INFO

ED FRIEDLAND

Ed "the Bass Whisperer" Friedland plays, writes, and teaches out of his bass base in Austin, Texas.
edfriedland.com

LISTEN



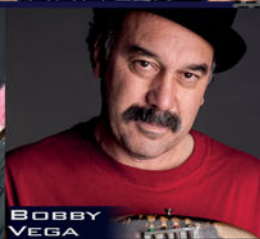
Buddy Guy, *A Man and the Blues*
[Vanguard, 1968]

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from the first notes of the intro, Meyers' bass is in your face, playing this persistent, jagged part that continues throughout the entire 5:35 performance. The rhythm has a stop-and-go feel, with the quarter-note on beat *one* providing a solid launch and landing pad for the activity that follows. Make sure to take the musical breath during the eighth-note rest; it's the only one you'll get. Reading this line in 12/8 is deceptively simple once you grasp that each group of three eighth-notes represents one beat of the main pulse. It could also be written in 4/4, with each group appearing as an eighth-note triplet, but not this time.

The line's angular nature makes it tricky to play, and Meyers' execution is about 95 percent spot-on, with just enough slop to make it "so funky you can smell it." The fingering I prefer starts with the tip of the middle finger on the low G; then you roll that same finger across to play the F (♭7) on the D string. It's a jump that can be refined to minimal movement with practice, and you'll be getting quite a bit of practice in this tune! The key is to play the F more toward the middle of the finger instead of the tip; this string-crossing finger-roll will also set you up for the return trip. Fret the E with your index finger. Your wrist will be

more active with this fingering—use it or lose it! Another fingering also starts with the tip of the middle finger on low G, but brings the ring finger underneath to play the F at the same fret. The advantage is less wrist movement, no finger roll, and the finger never leaves the low G, so the root is always there—it's virtually foolproof, if you like that sort of thing. The E is once again played with the index finger. I like the slop of the first method, but during a long night, I might just opt for foolproof.

The pattern (1-♭7-1-6-♭7-1-♭7-6-1-♭7) is consistent throughout, and is simply moved through the blues form, with one chromatic passing tone from the V to the IV, and a stock turnaround phrase in bar 12. From a melodic perspective, the 6-♭7 movement in the line establishes the Dorian mode over the Im7 and IVm7 chords, and the V7 occasionally jumps up to the ♭VI during the solos. While Buddy's impassioned vocals and guitar work are the focus and Otis Spann's piano is well featured, Jack Meyers defines the song with this unwavering, imploring, and ball-busting line. I suspect this is not the last we'll see of Meyers' playing in this column—his work seems to be an endless trove of surprises and fun. **BP**

EX. 1

♩. = 55

Gm7 Cm7 Gm7

5 Cm7 Gm7

9 D7 Cm7 Gm7 D7

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TRANSCRIPTION

“Hit Me With Your Rhythm Stick” By Ian Dury & the Blockheads

Norman Watt-Roy's Complete Bass Line

BY CHRIS JISI

PHOTOGRAPH BY NORMAN NISHIOKA

THE INFLUENTIAL REACH OF JACO PASTORIUS IS

immeasurable, spanning generations of bassists in all corners of the globe, in a multitude of musical styles. When it comes to processing that inspiration and swiftly filtering it into a major artistic statement, Norman Watt-Roy stands alone. Just a few weeks after seeing Jaco perform with Weather Report at London's Hammersmith Odeon in October 1978, Watt-Roy found himself in the studio with new wave darlings Ian Dury & the Blockheads, suggesting a surging 16th-note bass line for Dury's self-proclaimed anti-violence song “Hit Me With Your Rhythm Stick.” Released in November '78, the recording hit No. 1 on the U.K. singles chart in January, and has had an even more enduring role as one of the most famous and studied bass lines in British rock history. “They teach it at music universities here. It's become the standard bar-setter on the entrance exam auditions,” laughs Watt-Roy, who has been cited by everyone from Pino Palladino to Jamiroquai's Paul Turner as a key influence.

Born in Bombay, India, in 1951, Watt-Roy moved with his family to North London at age four. With the sounds of the Beatles and the Stones in his ears, he followed his older brother Garth, a lead guitarist, and began playing rhythm guitar at ten. When the bassist in his brother's band “couldn't take the blisters,” Garth suggested the 14-year-old Norman take over bass duties, which he did, first on a Rosetti Hofner and then on a Fender Jazz Bass. Inspired by Paul McCartney and the Tamla/Motown rumble of James Jamerson—“because they always had a counter-melody going on in their bass lines”—Norman got serious tutoring from Steve Miller's lefty bassist, Gerald Johnson, while touring the U.S. in 1970. Making his mark on vinyl back home, Watt-Roy formed the soul horn band Greatest Show On Earth with his brother, joined Glencoe in 1972, and then formed Loving Awareness with drummer Charley Charles. While doing a 1976 session with Charles for a friend, they met Ian Dury and Chaz Jankel, recorded the 1977 album *New Boots and Panties!!*, and officially became the Blockheads.

Although the band fell under the new wave/punk banner, the Blockheads incorporated other idioms into their singular sound, including funk, reggae, jazz, disco, music hall, and Dury's quasi-rap vocal style—all elements that

can be found on “Rhythm Stick.” Having rehearsed a week prior, where the tune was introduced, co-writers Dury (on scratch vocal) and Jankel on piano, drummer Charles (playing to a Roland Beat Box loop), Mickey Gallagher on Hammond organ, guitarist John Turnbull, and Watt-Roy assembled in the main room of the Workhouse Studio on London's Old Kent Road to cut the track live. Norman used his Sunburst '72 Fender Precision, which, he reports, had a thinner-than-usual P-Bass neck, an added Jazz Bass pickup, and Rotosound strings; the instrument was recorded direct to the API console, as well as via a mic on the studio's small bass amp. The group did 11 passes, eventually settling on one of the early takes. Watt-Roy made no punches or fixes, while overdubs included

Dury's final vocal, Davey Payne's sax solo (playing two saxophones simultaneously at times), a second snare drum part by Charles, and Turnbull's synth guitar.

The track begins with Watt-Roy's pulsating 16ths leading the groove over Charles' kick-drum quarter-notes and some funky piano and guitar comping. Offers Norman, “In rehearsal, Chaz had the tempo, the chords, and the eighth-note piano riff, and having just seen Jaco, I got the idea to double up the bass line and play 16ths.” He describes his ascending lick landing on the 7th (*E♭*) at the end of every two bars as “a little stopping point or breath, especially going into the verses.” For the first verse, at letter **A**, Watt-Roy, knowing his harmony, continues his 16th pace by playing through the changes using chord tones, generally two-at-a-time. Upon arriving

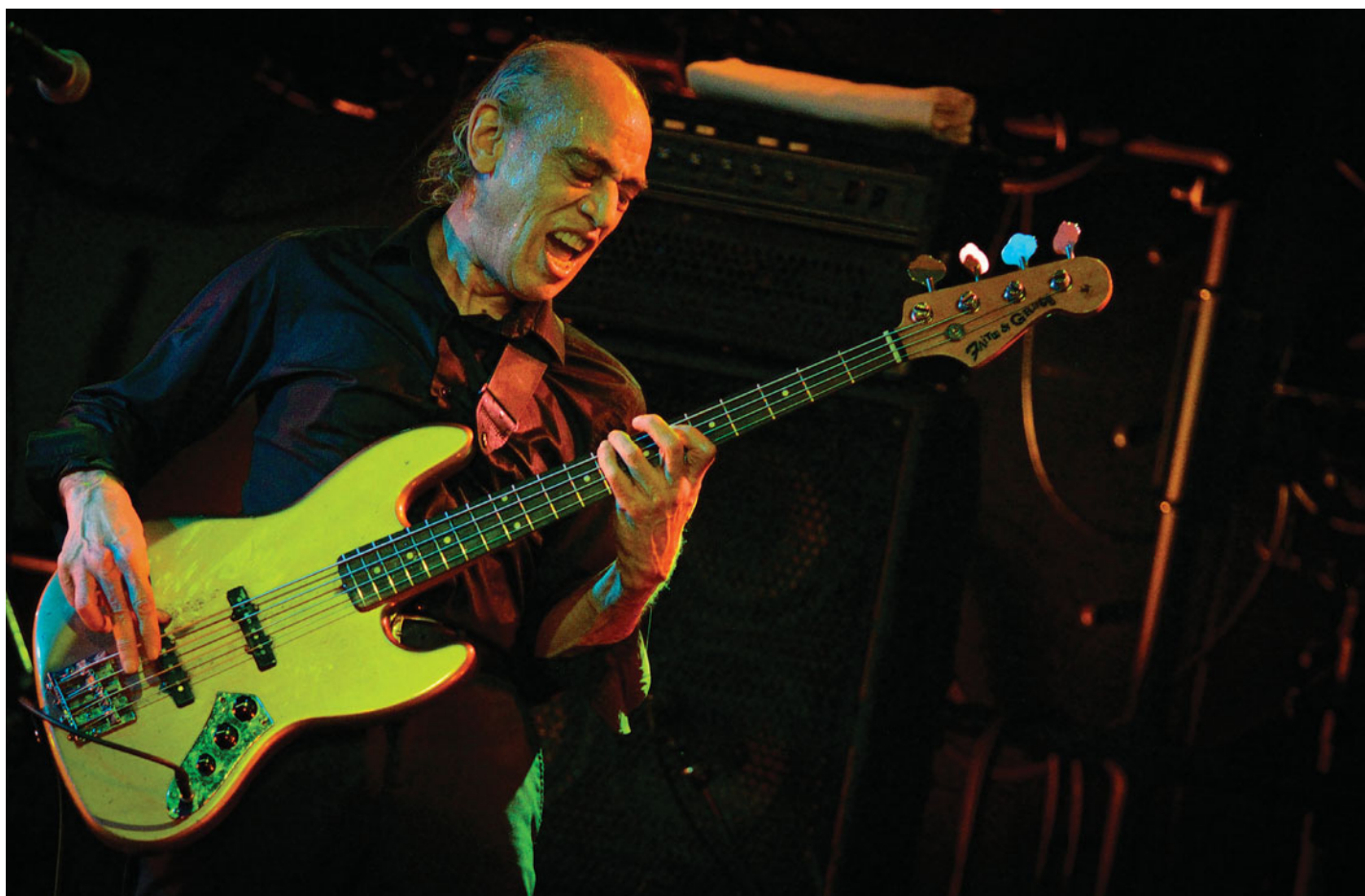


INFO

- Listen to Ian Dury & the Blockheads' “Hit Me With Your Rhythm Stick.”
 - Norman Watt-Roy plays “Rhythm Stick” live in 2013.
 - Norman Watt-Roy talks about and plays his “Rhythm Stick” P-Bass.
- bassplayer.com/july2014

CONNECT





at the IV chord ($D\flat$) in bars 10 and 14, the Jaco influence really emerges, as he quotes a familiar Pastorian boogie pattern utilizing the dominant 7th of the chord ($C\flat$), ghost-notes, and a $G\sharp$ chromatic passing tone. “There was bass before Jaco and after Jaco; his playing turned my whole life around by showing me that I have an orchestra in my hands. I first heard him on [Weather Report’s 1977 hit] ‘Birdland,’ and I found my way to his [1976] solo album, but then seeing him live was a whole other experience.” A key to the part, which Norman plucked with two alternating fingers and occasionally his ring finger, is how he subtly swings the line, mainly through the use of legato, long tones punctuated by periodic shortened notes.

Letter **B**’s first chorus finds the feel shifting to nicely contrasting eighth-note octaves (born of Jankel’s dance hall stride piano left hand and the disco of the time), which allows Watt-Roy to ground the groove while getting a break from the steady 16ths. He also doubles up some of the downbeats to keep the drive and energy intact. Letter **C**’s transition gives way to the similarly played second verse and chorus, at **D** and **E**, respectively. “We were making a single, so once I established a memorable part, it was just a matter of repeating it.” Letter **F**’s sax-led transition becomes a

breakdown and two-saxes-at-once solo, at **G**. Norman’s bass is bled back in at bar 59, setting up the third verse and chorus at **H** and **I**. The extra-long rideout over the intro chords (**J**) includes a shouting Dury, a Turnbull guitar solo, and a well-orchestrated stop that the drums play through, which the band elected to leave as is.

These days, Watt-Roy remains as busy as ever, having released both his biographical solo debut, *Faith & Grace*, and the Blockheads’ latest,

Same Horse Different Jockey, in 2013. This year is all about supporting *Going Back Home*, the new CD he anchors by longtime running-mate Wilko Johnson and Roger Daltrey. Reflecting on “Rhythm Stick,” he offers, “The challenge is to be pushing and leading the track with the 16ths, while also sitting with the drums in the pocket. Locking with the drummer is always job one. As Jaco famously said, ‘Women and rhythm section first.’” **BP**

10 Other Great Norman Watt-Roy Tracks*

- 1 Greatest Show On Earth, “**Horizons**” [*Horizons*, Repertoire, 1969]
- 2 Glencoe, “**Telephonia**” [*Glencoe*, Epic, 1972]
- 3 Ian Dury & the Blockheads, “**Wake Up and Make Love With Me**” [*New Boots and Panties!!*, JVC, 1977]
- 4 Ian Dury & the Blockheads, “**My Old Man**” [*New Boots and Panties!!*, JVC, 1977]
- 5 Ian Dury & the Blockheads, “**What a Waste!**” (single) [JVC, 1978]
- 6 Ian Dury & the Blockheads, “**Superman’s Big Sister**” (single) [Victor, 1980]
- 7 The Clash, “**Magnificent Seven**” (single) [Epic, 1980]
- 8 Roger Daltrey, “**Is There Anybody Out There?**” [*Parting Should Be Painless*, Atlantic, 1984]
- 9 Wilko Johnson, “**Dr. Dupree**” [*The Best of Wilko Johnson, Vol. 2*, Cadiz Music, 2010]
- 10 Norman Watt-Roy, “**Wachu-Wa**” [*Faith & Grace*, Cardiz Music, 2013]

* Watt-Roy also created and played the original bass line on 1984’s “Relax” by Frankie Goes To Hollywood, which was sampled into a Fairlight CMI for the released version.



"Hit Me With Your Rhythm Stick"

Transcription by Chris Jisi

Medium funk

♩ = 106

Intro

Fm

3 1 1 3 3 1 1 3 3 1 1 3 1 4 1

3 1 1 3 3 1 1 3 6 8 6 3 1 1 3 3 1 1 3 1 4 1

4

B $\flat$ C Fm

3 1 1 3 3 1 1 3 6 8 6 8 8 1 1 3 3 3 1 1 3 1 4 1

3 1 1 3 3 1 1 3 6 8 6 8 8 3 1 1 3 3 1 1 3 1 4 1

8

Fm E $\flat$ /G A $\flat$ D $\flat$ Fm

10 8 8 10 10 8 8 6 6 5 5 5 6 6 8 8 6 6 6 6 8 8 6 4 6 4 6 3 3 6 3 4 5 6 10 (8) 8 10 10 8 8 6 6 8 8 6 6 8 8

12

E $\flat$ /G A $\flat$ D $\flat$ E $\flat$ C7/E

10 8 8 10 10 8 8 6 6 5 5 6 6 8 8 6 6 8 8 6 4 6 4 6 3 3 6 3 4 5 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 6 5 6 7

16

F Gm7 F/A Gm7 F7 F Gm7 F/A Gm7 F7

3 5 7 5 3 3 3 3 0 2 0 3 3 3 3

1 3 5 5 3 1 1 1 1 1 3 0 3 1 1 1 1

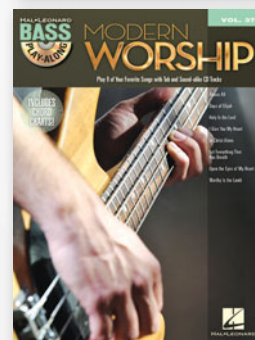
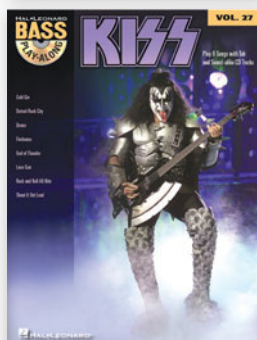
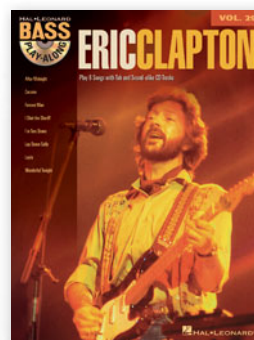
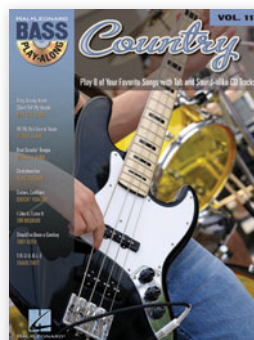
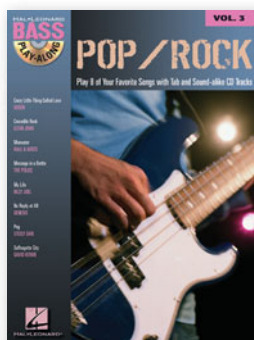
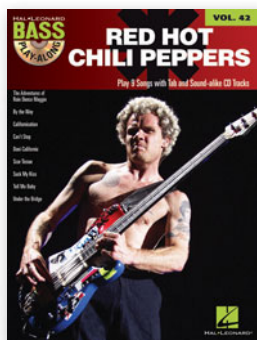
20

F Gm7 A $\flat$ dim7 F/A B $\flat$ F/A A $\flat$ dim7 G7 B $\flat$ C Fm

3 5 6 7 8 7 6 1 1 3 3 1 3 1 1 3 3 1 1 3 1 4 1

1 1 3 3 4 4 5 5 6 6 5 5 4 4 3 1 1 3 3 1 3 1 1 3 1 1 3 1 4 1

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24 B $\flat$ C Fm

28 Fm E $\flat$ /G A $\flat$ D $\flat$ Fm

32 E $\flat$ /G A $\flat$ D $\flat$ E $\flat$ C7/E

36 F Gm7 F/A Gm7 F7 F Gm7 F/A Gm7 F7 F Gm7 A $\flat$ dim7 F/A

41 B $\flat$ F/A A $\flat$ dim7 G7 B $\flat$ C F Fm

45

Handwritten transcription of a bass line in F major, featuring various chords and fingerings. The notation includes a bass clef, a key signature of one flat (B $\flat$), and a common time signature (C). The transcription is divided into measures, with chord changes indicated above the staff. Fingerings are written below the staff, and some measures include a 'H' (harmonic) or 'S' (slide) marking. The transcription is written in a style that is easy to read and understand, with a focus on the bass line.

75

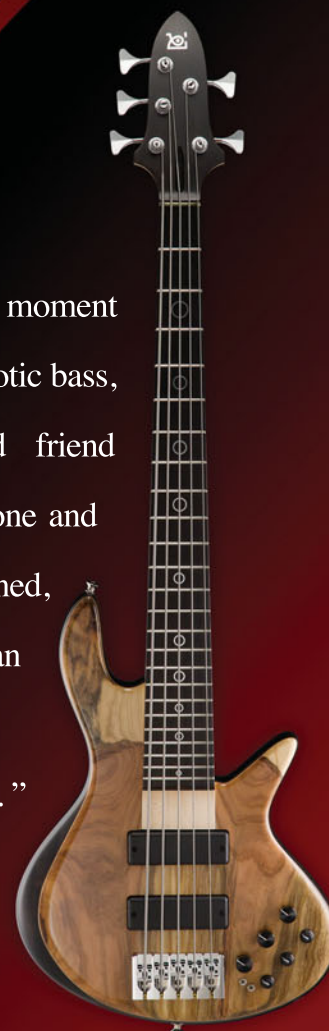
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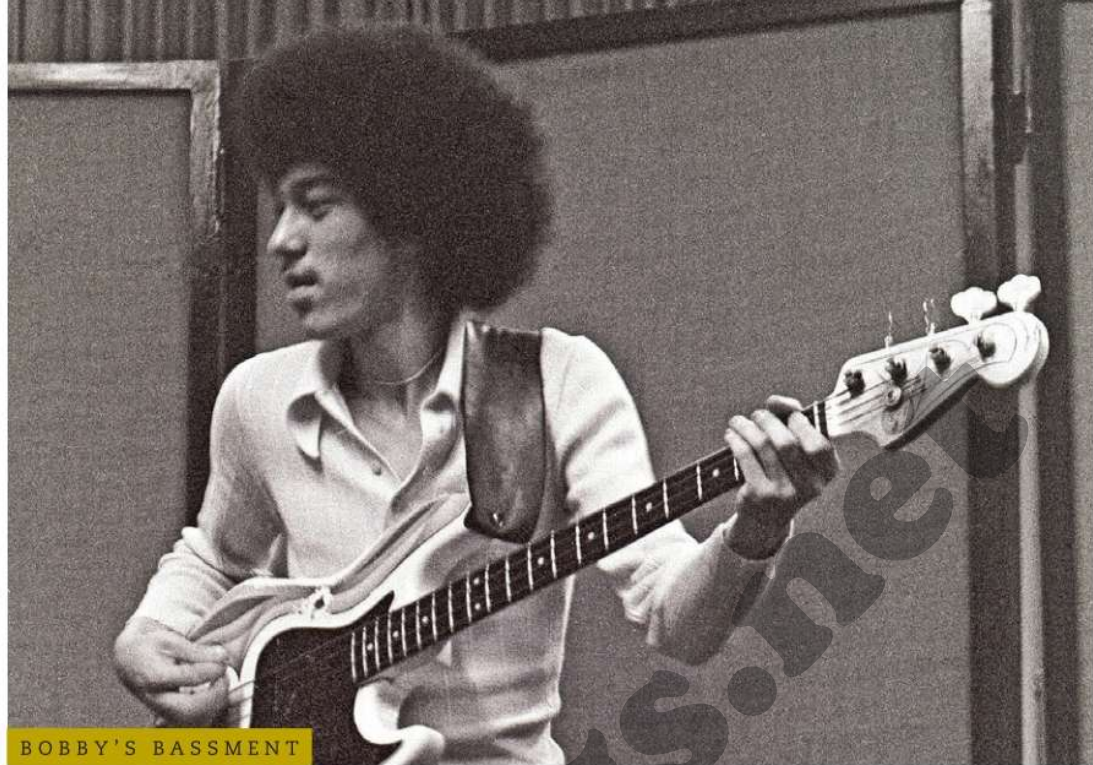
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BOBBY'S BASSMENT

Who Are You, And What Do You Do?

LAST MONTH, I WROTE THAT I WAS ON THE OTHER

side and that I'm still alive. Well, this one is about getting to the other side, and what it all turned into.

I started playing in Bay Area clubs when I was 15 years old, back in the early '70s, and it was at places like the Stone, Keystone Berkeley, Keystone Palo Alto, Frenchy's, Country Road, the Lion's Share, the Jolly Fryer, Woodstock, the Orphanage, Mr. D's, and the Country Store that I really started to learn how to play bass. My first real band, in seventh grade, was called Drug, and we made noise—*loud* noise—and we thought it was music. God bless Dwight Runner's parents, because we sucked. We were loud and terrible, but that was the first time I got to play wide open, turn my amp up, and hear my bass. Man, I was playing, and for the first time, I felt the power of playing music!

Okay, fast forward. I've been very blessed, lucky, and fortunate to have played with some of the greatest musicians and entertainers in the history of R&B, soul, funk, blues, psychedelic rock, and jazz fusion. This is where I learned how to make music with people. Yes, when you play with people, you learn how to make music and really play music.

Most of the time I got called to audition for a band or play a gig, I didn't know how to play that style of music. But because I was new, open, and willing to learn, they let me in. It's like *The Karate Kid* and Mr. Miyagi: I didn't know I was learning how to play music until it was over, and after it was over, it became part of my DNA. The way I play now is an accumulation of all my experiences with people, music concerts I've been to, and gigs I've played. Part of what I learned how to do is to play the sound of the music—not just the bass line,

but the sound of the whole band together, the whole biscuit.

For example, I've played in both Jefferson Starships—yes, there are two Jefferson Starships! One of them is Mickey "Fooled Around and Fell in Love" Thomas's Starship. He's the guy who sang on all the Starship's hits in the '80s, and he has one of the greatest voices in music. That man can *sang*! That's the gig where I learned how to play pop-rock, songs like "Jane," "Sara," "We Built This City," "Nothing Gonna Stop Us," "No Way Out," and "Fooled Around and Fell in Love." The other 'Ship is really the Jefferson Airplane, where Mr. Jack Casady played the BASS on those songs. Jack Casady was my first bass hero! He was the first bass player I ever saw playing chords and melody in his bass lines, and man—what a (((sound)))! He has that thing called TONE. I didn't know you could do this on a bass.

This is an iconic bass chair, and when people come to see that band play, they're expecting to see Jack Casady play songs like "White Rabbit," "Somebody to Love," and "Crown of Creation." At one show, I played the bass intro to "White Rabbit" with a thumb-style triplet, and I thought it was cool—well, creative, at least. Right in the middle of the lick, I hear Paul Kantner say, "That ain't the way it goes!" As soon as I heard him say that, I switched over and played it with my fingers, and then I heard him say, "That's the way it goes."

It's about how it feels and the sound. Later on, this would happen to me again, but this time I got it. I've learned what *not* to do—not what to do. There is a difference! Rewinding way back, what can I say? Sometimes I'm all over the place like a glass of spilt water. I need a mop and a bucket!

May the groove be with us. —BOBBY VEGA

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